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ABSTRACT

A program was designed to improve the reading achievement of second grade students in a rural Georgia school. An analysis of the problem indicated that: a higher percentage of second grade students from low socioeconomic conditions scored lower on standardized reading achievement tests than other second grade students; students who scored lower owned fewer books than those who scored higher; and those who scored lower did less recreational reading than those who scored higher. Interventions included a program of daily oral reading in the classrooms by teachers and recruiting parents to enroll their children in the Woodbine (Elementary School) Read Aloud Club. Parents who enrolled their children in the club agreed to read aloud to their children on a daily basis and turn in simple reading logs to the teachers each month. As a reward for their parents' read aloud efforts, the children received free storybooks of their choice each month. The objectives were to improve the students' reading comprehension, word reading, and auditory vocabulary using the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test to measure any changes in reading ability. Test results indicated a 38.5% increase in auditory vocabulary, a 46.4% increase in reading comprehension, and a 43.6% increase in word reading for the approximately 70 subjects. (Twenty-seven tables of data are included; 53 references, 2 appendixes of data, a list of educational objectives, the enrollment form, a reading log, 2 sample newsletters, 2 newspaper articles, and a site visitation team report are attached.) (Author/RS)

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ED359493

Developing and Implementing a Plan to Improve the
Reading Achievement of Second Grade Students at
Woodbine Elementary School

by

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Woodbine, Georgia

A Major Applied Research Project Report
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Education

National Ed.D. Program for Educational Leaders
Nova University

February 1993

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Abstract

Developing and Implementing a Plan to Improve the Reading Achievement of Second Grade Students at Woodbine Elementary School

This report describes a program designed to improve the reading achievement of second grade students in a rural Georgia school. An analysis of the problem indicated that a higher percentage of second grade students from low socioeconomic conditions scored lower on standardized reading achievement tests than other second grade students in the school. One of the probable causes for low reading achievement was related to the number of books students owned. Students who scored low on reading achievement tests owned fewer books than students who scored higher. Another probable cause was related to the amount of recreational reading done by students. Those students who scored low on reading achievement tests did less recreational reading than those students who scored higher.

The search of the literature revealed that involving parents in a read aloud program with their children was one of the best ways to improve reading achievement. Interventions included a program of daily oral reading in the classrooms by the teachers and recruiting parents to enroll their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. Parents who enrolled their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club agreed to read aloud to their children on a daily basis and to turn in simple reading logs to the teachers each month. As a reward for their parents' read aloud efforts, the children received free storybooks of their choice from the principal each month.

The objectives were to improve the students' reading comprehension, word reading, and auditory vocabulary using the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test to measure any changes in reading ability. Tests results indicated a 38.5% increase in auditory vocabulary, a 46.4% increase in reading comprehension and a 43.6% increase in word reading for the subjects in the study. These results were supportive of the project's effectiveness.

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Chapter 1

Problem and Problem Background

Statement and Primary Evidence of the Problem

Second grade students who attended Woodbine Elementary School during 1988, 1989, and 1990, did not achieve average percentile ranks on the reading portion of the Iowa Tests of Basis Skills that were above the Georgia statewide average percentile ranks in reading nor above the average percentile ranks for reading for other elementary schools in Camden County.

Overview of the Problem Setting

Woodbine Elementary School is located in the City of Woodbine, which is in the southeast coastal area of Georgia. Woodbine is 20 miles south of Brunswick, Georgia, and approximately 50 miles north of Jacksonville, Florida. Students attending Woodbine Elementary School come from the northern half of Camden County.

Woodbine Elementary School was the subject of the study. The school had a population of 440 students in grades K-5 and 65 faculty and staff members. The faculty and staff consisted of a principal, an assistant principal, a media specialist, a school counselor (1/2 time), four kindergarten teachers, four first grade teachers, three second grade teachers, three third grade teachers, three fourth grade teachers, three fifth grade teachers, two Chapter 1 teachers, a

special education teacher, a music teacher, a physical education teacher, a speech teacher (1/3 time), an office manager, a secretary, a media clerk, a resource paraprofessional, twenty classroom paraprofessionals, seven food service personnel, and four custodians.

The ethnic composition of the students and the adults who worked with the children at Woodbine Elementary School was quite diverse. The ethnic balance of the students was almost equal. Fifty-three percent of the children were Black and 47% were Caucasian. The adults working at the school had an ethnic ratio of 33% Black to 67% Caucasian. However, this percentage was somewhat misleading, since only 24% of the classroom teachers were Black, while 76% of them were Caucasian.

An increase in the percentage of Blacks working directly with the children occurred with the paraprofessionals, since 40% of them were Black, and 60% were Caucasian. Both administrators were Caucasian, as were the media specialist, school counselor, and part-time speech teacher. The office manager was Caucasian and the secretary was Black. The media clerk and the resource center paraprofessional were Caucasian. Three of the food service workers were Black, and four were Caucasian. All four of the custodians were Black.

The socioeconomic level of the families in the attendance area

served by Woodbine Elementary School was quite low. Two hundred sixty (59%) of the children attending the school qualified for the free or reduced lunch program. Two hundred sixteen (49%) of the children qualified for the free lunch program, and 44 (10%) qualified for the reduced cost meals. The high percentage of children qualifying for the free or reduced lunch program was an indication of the low socioeconomic status of many of the families who sent their children to the school.

The school qualified for two Chapter 1 teachers because of the high percentage of students who were below grade level in reading or mathematics in second through fifth grades. One hundred thirty-nine (47%) of the children in grades two through five were served by the Chapter 1 program. One hundred eighteen of the children were served in Chapter 1 reading, and eighty were served in Chapter 1 mathematics. Some children qualified for both Chapter 1 reading and mathematics.

In kindergarten and first grade, a Special Instructional Assistance (SIA) program was initiated in the 1989-1990 school year to serve those children who were identified as having developmental deficiency delays which could result in problems preventing them from maintaining a level of performance consistent with expectations for their age range. For the 1990-1991 school year, 32% of the students in kindergarten and first grade were

identified as having developmental delays and qualified for the SIA program.

Description of Surrounding Community

Camden County is located on the southeast coast of Georgia. It is south of Brunswick, Georgia, and it borders Florida on the north. There are three incorporated cities within the county: Kingsland; St. Marys; and Woodbine. Kingsland and St. Marys are situated in the southern portion of the county, while Woodbine is located in the northern section of the county.

According to U.S. Census data, the population of Camden County changed considerably during the 1980's (Table 1).

Table 1

Camden County Population from the U.S. Census

Year	Population
1960	9975
1970	11334
1980	13371
1990	30167

As the Camden County population changed, so did the incorporated and unincorporated areas of the county. The following table (Table 2) reflects the changes in the population in the incorporated cities

and in the unincorporated area of the county:

Table 2

Population of the Incorporated and Unincorporated Areas of Camden County

Area	1980	1990
Kingsland	2008	4699
St. Marys	3696	8187
Woodbine	910	1212
Unincorporated	6857	16069

The change in the population in Camden County during the 1980's had been, for the most part, due to the installation of the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base. In 1979, construction was started on the future site of the Naval Base, and in 1981, Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base was officially opened for military service personnel.

Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base is located adjacent to St. Marys, in the southern portion of Camden County. The population growth in Camden County centered around the Naval Base. The growth of St. Marys and Kingsland were more affected by the advent of the Naval Base than Woodbine. However, there was considerable growth throughout the unincorporated area of the county.

The Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base greatly affected the growth

of the Camden County School System. Since the construction of the Naval Base started, two elementary schools and two middle school were constructed in the Kingsland-St. Marys area.

Other schools already in service during this construction boom included three elementary schools and a high school. The cities of Kingsland, St. Marys and Woodbine each had an elementary school. One middle school was located in St. Marys, and the other middle school was in Kingsland. The high school was located in St. Marys.

The new Woodbine Elementary School was opened for occupancy during the 1991-1992 school year. On January 2, 1992, the students, faculty and staff moved into the new facility. The new building replaced the old structure originally built in 1926. The old school building was given to the Camden County Commissioners for their use. For the 1991-1992 school year, student enrollment increased at Woodbine Elementary School. Additional teachers, paraprofessionals and other staff members were employed to meet the educational needs of the additional students who were enrolled when the school opened.

The school population in Camden County had experienced an increase each year since the announcement that Camden County would have a Naval Submarine Base at Kings Bay. The following table (Table 3) reflects the changes in the average daily attendance in Camden County since 1978-1979:

Table 3

School System Attendance

Year	Students
1978-1979	2680
1979-1980	2804
1980-1981	2978
1981-1982	3078
1982-1983	3203
1983-1984	3262
1984-1985	3313
1985-1986	3723
1986-1987	3984
1987-1988	4288
1988-1989	4708
1989-1990	5222
1990-1991	5686

The total school enrollment for the 1990-1991 school year for Camden County for the fifth month of school was 6,137. The percentage of attendance was 93, so the average daily attendance was 5,686. The following table reflects the attendance for each of the schools in Camden County for the 1990-1991 school year:

Table 4

Student Enrollment for Camden County Schools 1990-1991

School	Students
Crooked River Elementary	868
Kingsland Elementary	574
Matilda Harris Elementary	818
St. Marys Elementary	758
Woodbine Elementary	440
Camden Middle	724
Mary Lee Clark Middle	602
Camden County High	1353

Woodbine Elementary School had the lowest enrollment of all the elementary schools in Camden County. While other elementary schools were experiencing growth problems, especially trying to find sufficient classroom space, Woodbine Elementary School was not experiencing the same type of problems.

Chapter 2

Problem Definition and Evidence

Problem Background

In 1988, 1989, and 1990, second grade students who attended Woodbine Elementary School received lower than anticipated scores on the reading portion of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS). The reading scores for the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School during these three years showed that students achieved lower average percentile ranks than the Georgia statewide average percentile ranks and the national percentile ranks. In addition, second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School had average reading percentile scores that were lower than any other elementary school in the county.

Evidence of Problem Discrepancy

The Georgia Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) required norm-referenced tests to be administered to students in grades two and four. Results of these tests were used in planning instructional improvement activities and in various program evaluation efforts.

The 1988-1990 average percentile scores on the reading portion of the ITBS for second grade students are given in the following

table (Table 5) for Woodbine Elementary School (WES), Camden County and Georgia:

Table 5

Second Grade Reading Percentile Scores 1988-1990

Date	Grade	Average Reading Percentile Scores		
		WES	County	State
3/88	2	50	60	62
3/89	2	42	57	63
3/90	2	37	61	66

From 1988 through 1990, the average reading percentile scores of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School decreased. This indicated that there was a need for reading improvement in second grade at the school, and a need to determine the causes of the decline in reading scores.

The 1988 through 1990 ITBS reading percentile scores for second grade students from each of the five elementary schools in the Camden County School System were examined and compared. The following table (Table 6) gives the average ITBS reading percentile scores for second grade students in each of the Camden County elementary schools:

Table 6

Second Grade Reading ITBS Scores Camden County Schools

School	1988	1989	1990
	Score	Score	Score

Crooked River (CRES)	53	60	71
Kingsland (KES)	62	55	57
Matilda Harris (MHES)	-	-	57
St. Marys (SMES)	72	65	67
Woodbine (WES)	50	42	43

From 1989 to 1990, three of the elementary schools in Camden County experienced an increase in the average percentile scores in reading for second grade students on four occasions, while two of these elementary schools twice experienced a decrease in reading scores. The 1988 ITBS reading scores for second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School were the lowest of all the elementary schools in Camden County, and second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School had average reading percentile scores that decreased for the next two consecutive years. The ITBS reading scores for second grade students from other elementary schools in

Camden County during this period of time did not reflect the same decrease in test scores. There are not any 1988 and 1989 ITBS reading scores reported for Matilda Harris Elementary School because it did not receive students until the 1989 - 1990 school year. Matilda Harris Elementary School officially opened in August, 1989. Students attending Matilda Harris Elementary School came from the former attendance zones of Woodbine Elementary School and Kingsland Elementary School.

The ITBS test data were more conclusive when the number of students scoring below a certain percentile was determined and that number was reported as a percentage. The 50th and the 25th percentiles were chosen as markers to distinguish levels of achievement. Above the 50th percentile was considered acceptable reading achievement, and below the 25th percentile was considered very low reading achievement for second grade students. All students who scored below the 25th percentile in reading would also be reflected in the numbers of those students scoring below the 50th percentile. The following table (Table 7) shows the number of second grade students who scored below the 50th percentile and below the 25th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS from 1989-1990, for each of the elementary schools in Camden County. It also gives the number of students tested and the percent of students scoring below the 50th and 25th percentiles:

Table 7

Second Grade Students Scoring Below the 50th and 25th Percentiles
on the ITBS

School	Year	Grade	<50th	%	<25th	%	No. Tested
CRES	1988	2	55	57.3	24	25.0	96
KES	1988	2	41	51.2	15	18.8	80
SMES	1988	2	40	37.7	24	22.6	106
WES	1988	2	66	60.0	37	33.6	110
CRES	1989	2	54	46.6	18	15.5	116
KES	1989	2	60	47.6	34	27.0	126
SMES	1989	2	47	39.8	25	21.2	118
WES	1989	2	69	65.7	41	39.0	105
CRES	1990	2	41	33.9	26	21.5	121
KES	1990	2	31	41.3	15	20.0	75
MHES	1990	2	54	48.2	34	30.4	112
SMES	1990	2	43	35.0	22	17.9	123
WES	1990	2	46	64.8	28	39.4	71

Woodbine Elementary School had a higher percentage of second grade students scoring below the 50th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS from 1988 to 1990, compared to the other elementary schools in Camden County during the same years. The

percentage of second grade students scoring below the 25th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS was 18.7% higher during the three year period than the average percentile for each of the other elementary schools in Camden County. The percentage of second grade students scoring below the 25th percentile on reading indicated that Woodbine Elementary School had a proportionally high number of lower achieving reading students in second grade.

The Camden County School System participated in the free or reduced price lunch program. Table 8 shows the percentage of students on free or reduced price lunches:

Table 8

Students on the Free or Reduced Lunch Program

School	% Free	% Reduced	% Free & Reduced
CRCS	11	15	26
KES	25	10	35
MHES	21	13	34
SMES	28	7	35
WES	47	12	59
CMS	27	11	38
MLCMS	13	8	21
CCHS	11	5	16
COUNTY	20	10	30

Woodbine Elementary School had the highest percentage of students on the free or reduced price lunch program in the Camden County School System. The percentage of students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving free lunches was over twice the average percentage of students receiving free lunches at the other elementary schools in Camden County. This high percentage of students receiving free lunches at Woodbine Elementary School was an indicator of the low socioeconomic conditions of the families from which many of the children come. These low socioeconomic conditions of the children were reflected in their reading achievements. Children from low socioeconomic conditions in the Woodbine area did not perform as well on standardized reading achievement tests as did children who came from high socioeconomic conditions.

Each year at Woodbine Elementary School, students who did not meet promotion criteria were retained at grade level. The Camden County Board of Education established promotion criteria for the school system. The promotion criteria for students in the elementary schools included passing the required major subjects with grades of 70 and above and meeting the reading requirements. Reading requirements were established for each grade. The following table (Table 9) gives the year and grade retained for students at Woodbine Elementary School:

Table 9

Retained Students

Year	K	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
1985	9	0	0	0	0	0
1986	1	6	0	0	0	0
1987	2	11	5	0	0	0
1988	12	14	6	1	0	0
1989	2	3	4	1	1	0
1990	3	4	1	1	0	0

Students who were retained one or more years made up a high percentage of the students attending Woodbine Elementary School. Of the 440 students attending the school, 17.7% of them were retained one or more years. Of the 58 students who were retained in first through fourth grades from 1986 to 1990, 75.9% were retained because they failed to meet the reading requirements for promotion.

Teacher turnover was a factor that affected the reading program and the overall curriculum at Woodbine Elementary School. There were many classroom teachers at Woodbine Elementary School from 1985 through 1991, and in various grades (Appendix A, page 136). The following table (Table 10) shows the number of teachers by grade and year:

Table 10

Classroom Teachers by Grade and Year

Grade	90-91	89-90	88-89	87-88	86-87	85-86	84-85
K	4	5	5	4	3	3	3
1st	4	4	4	6	6	3	4
2nd	3	3	5	5	4	3	4
3rd	3	3	4	4	5	3	2
4th	3	3	4	5	3	3	2
5th	3	3	5	4	3	5	3

The table above does not reflect the teacher turnover during this seven year period. There were nine different teachers in kindergarten from 1985-1991. During this period of time, first and second grades each had 11 different teachers. Third grade had 7 teachers, while fourth and fifth grades each had 13 teachers. There were only five teachers in the school who remained in the same grade during this period of time. Kindergarten had two teachers who taught in the same position for seven years, and each of the other grades, except for second grade, had one teacher in the same position for this period of time. The longest tenure for a second grade teacher at Woodbine Elementary School was four years, and

the average tenure in second grade was two and a-half years.

This data implied that whatever the reasons for teacher turnover, Woodbine Elementary School had experienced a considerable turnover at each grade level except for third grade during the seven years. Personnel records indicated that the majority of teacher turnover was related to the mobility of the instructional staff. The number of teachers employed in second grade during this time and the brevity of tenure indicated that consistency in the curriculum may have been lacking.

In the Camden County School System, teachers earned 12 days of sick leave each year. Three of the 12 sick leave days could be used as personal days upon advanced approval by the administration. Sick days and/or personal days that were not used could be accumulated by the teacher. A maximum of 45 days of sick leave could be accumulated by each teacher. Accumulated sick leave up to 45 days could be transferred by a teacher to another school in Camden County or to another public school system in Georgia. Sick leave earned above 45 days not used by a teacher was lost. The number of days teachers were absent from classroom instruction at Woodbine Elementary School was obtained from attendance records. The following table (Table 11) gives the number of days absent for the classroom teachers at Woodbine Elementary School from 1988 through 1990:

Table 11

Days Absent for Classroom Teachers

Teacher	Grade	1987-1988	1988-1989	1989-1990
101	K	-	0	-
102	K	3	11	12.5
104	K	8	16	20.5
106	K	8	10	13.5
107	K	-	-	3.5
108	K	9	8	7
110	1st	9	0	-
111	1st	-	11.5	9.5
112	1st	0	-	-
114	1st	1	6	-
116	1st	9	-	-
117	1st	3	8.5	1
118	1st	-	-	7
119	1st	7	7	15
101	2nd	3	-	-
120	2nd	-	14.5	-
122	2nd	40	11.5	12.5
123	2nd	-	-	13.5
125	2nd	6	-	-
115	2nd	15	12	-
118	2nd	4	7	-
126	2nd	-	6	17.5

From 1988 through 1990, the average number of days teachers were absent from the classroom increased each year from kindergarten through second grade. There were no records indicating the reasons for the increased number of absences for teachers from kindergarten through second grade. Teacher absences required employing substitute teachers to provide classroom instruction. Prospective substitute teachers received four hours of training before entering the classroom. Substitutes used at Woodbine Elementary School did not have the training and experience to provide an equal educational program for the students compared to the certified teachers.

The Georgia Department of Education issued teacher certification based on persons completing college degrees with approved training in teacher education. In Georgia, there were four basic types of professional teacher certification, T-4 through T-7. Teachers having a B.S. Ed. Degree and the required education courses were eligible for T-4 certification. T-5 certification was for those teachers who had a Master's Degree and the approved education courses. Persons having an Education Specialist Degree were given T-6 certification, and teachers having T-7 certification earned a doctorate in education.

The following table (Table 12) gives teacher experience in education and certification levels for the classroom teachers at

Woodbine Elementary School for the 1990-1991 school year:

Table 12

Teacher Experience and Certification

Teacher	Grade	Years Experience	Certification
103	K	2	T-4
104	K	18	T-4
107	K	1	T-4
108	K	11	T-4
109	1st	9	T-4
111	1st	17	T-6
117	1st	26	T-5
119	1st	9	T-4
123	2nd	16	T-4
106	2nd	6	T-4
118	2nd	21	T-5
128	3rd	12	T-4
129	3rd	35	T-4
130	3rd	8	T-4
133	3rd	15	T-5
134	4th	9	T-4
137	4th	15	T-4
148	5th	19	T-5
151	5th	18	T-5
153	5th	11	T-5

Although teacher certification and experience were not necessarily part of the reading problem, apathy can be a problem. Of

the 13 teachers in kindergarten through fifth grade who had T-4 certification, 7 of them were working toward Master's Degrees. The other six teachers who had T-4 certification each indicated that they had no intention of ever going back to college for an advanced degree.

Another factor considered in relationship to the reading problem was the amount of worksheets teachers gave to students. Table 13 gives the number of photocopied sheets for each teacher in K-2 during 1989-1990:

Table 13

Photocopying 1989-1990

Teacher	Grade	Sheets	Students	Copies/Student	Per/Day
102	K	15106	18	839	4.7
104	K	6592	18	366	2.0
106	K	8724	18	485	2.7
107	K	11675	17	687	3.8
108	K	5807	19	306	1.7
111	1st	7676	21	365	2.0
117	1st	17720	21	844	4.7
118	1st	14049	21	669	3.7
119	1st	13183	21	628	3.5
122	2nd	15065	27	558	3.1
123	2nd	19111	27	708	3.9
126	2nd	16694	21	795	4.4

The number of worksheets students received at the school was a problem not only in reading but in other areas of the curriculum, too. When students were completing worksheets, they were losing teacher instructional time. Each second grade teacher averaged using approximately 17,000 photocopied sheets during the school year. The number of worksheets given to each second grade student averaged 3.8 per day. The average number of worksheets used in the classroom increased from kindergarten through second grade.

In order to make comparisons in reading achievement of second grade students who had been enrolled at Woodbine Elementary School from 1988 through 1990, two groups of ten second grade students were chosen each year. One group included those who scored lower than acceptable on the reading portion of the ITBS. The second group had scored the highest on the same test. The following table gives the average reading percentile scores on the ITBS for the two groups of second grade students from 1988 through 1990:

Table 14

Second Grade ITBS Reading Scores for Targeted Groups

Group A		Group B	
Average ITBS Scores	Year	Average ITBS Scores	Year
18.5	1988	85.8	1988
7.9	1989	80.2	1989
8.8	1990	79.8	1990

Group A contained students who scored the lowest, and Group B were students who scored the highest on the reading portion of the ITBS from 1988 to 1990. The Group A students had average reading scores below the 25th percentile, and the Group B students had average reading scores above the 75th percentile. The average reading percentile scores for each group decreased during the three year period.

In the public schools systems of Georgia, a child may enter kindergarten if he or she has obtained the age of five years before September 1 of the year entering school. The following table (Table 15) gives the average age in months of the selected groups of second grade students at the time they entered kindergarten at Woodbine Elementary School:

Table 15

Age in Months of 2nd Grade Students Entering Kindergarten

Group A		Group B	
Average Age	Year	Average Age	Year
65.6	1988	65.5	1988
65.8	1989	66.5	1989
64.2	1990	65.5	1990

On the average, the students in Group A were younger than the students in Group B when they entered kindergarten. The average age of Group A students when they entered school was 65.2 months, and

the average age of the Group B students was 65.8 months. Those students who were experiencing developmental delays when they entered kindergarten tended to be younger than those students who were more developmentally mature when they entered school.

The second grade student target population included a number of students who were retained one or more years. To be retained at grade level, a student must have failed two or more major subjects or failed to meet the reading requirements for the grade level. The major subjects were reading, English, science, social studies, mathematics, and physical education. Table 16 gives the retained students and the grade retained:

Table 16

Second Grade Students Who Were Retained

Student	Grade Retained	Group	Student	Grade Retained	Group
0188	K	A	1089	K and 2nd	A
0288	K	A	0690	2nd	A
0988	2nd	A	0890	1st	A
1088	2nd	A	1188	1st	B
0289	1st	A	1589	2nd	B
0589	1st	A	1290	2nd	B
0989	1st	A			

Ten percent of the Group B students were retained during the

first three grades compared to 33% for Group A students. Seventy-five percent of the students retained in first and second grades were retained because they did not meet reading promotion requirements. The remaining 25% of the students were retained because they failed two or more major subjects.

The lunch status of the second grade target population students are listed in Table 17. The number of students receiving free or reduced lunches are given for each group.

Table 17

Lunch Status of Second Grade Students

Group A		Group B	
Free	Reduced	Free	Reduced
17	5	5	4

Group A had the lowest reading scores and the highest percentage of students qualifying for free lunches. Group B had the highest reading scores and the lowest number of students receiving free lunches. Group A had the highest percentage of students qualifying for reduced price lunches compared to Group B students who received reduced price lunches. Seventy percent of the Group B students did not qualify for either the free or reduced price lunches, while only 27% of the Group A students did not qualify for the free or reduced price lunch program. It indicated that students who

scored lower in reading tended to come from family conditions of lower socioeconomic status than those students who scored at the highest levels in reading.

According to the policies of the Camden County School System, an elementary student who has more than twenty days of unexcused absences may not receive credit for a grade level. A students who is absent from school for any portion of a school day must provide the appropriate school official with a written excuse from a parent, guardian or physician. The excuse must provide a reason for the absence.

The average number of days absent from kindergarten through second grade for the target groups of second grade students is given in the following table:

Table 18

Average Number of Days Absent for Second Grade Students

Group A		Group B	
Year	Days Absent	Year	Days Absent
1988	8.6	1988	8.0
1989	7.4	1989	7.3
1990	4.6	1990	6.3

The average number of days absent for each group was seven days. This indicated that the students had good attendance no

matter what their academic standing. It also indicated that because of good student attendance, teachers had an opportunity to provide maximum amounts of instructional time for all students.

The reading portion of the ITBS was analyzed to determine specific areas of weakness by examining individual student performance profiles. The reading portion of the ITBS was subdivided into three categories: facts; inferences and generalizations. Each of these categories was analyzed for each of the target students. The following table (Table 19) gives the reading analysis for the target population of second grade students.

Table 19

Average ITBS Reading Scores Analysis for Second Grade Students

Year	NPR	Pupil % Correct		
		Facts	Inferences	Generalizations
1988	18.5	50.8	36.4	51
National % Correct		67	69	62
1989	7.7	34.3	30.4	38
National % Correct		67	69	62
1990	8.8	40.7	32.5	45
National % Correct		70	71	79

This table indicated that second grade students at Woodbine

Elementary School performed below national averages in three subcategories on the reading portion of the ITBS. It implied that teachers must look more closely at their course content to insure that they are teaching the concepts that will enable students to master these three categories.

During the 1990-1991 school year at Woodbine Elementary School, students in grades two through five kept library reading logs for six months. The following table (Table 20) shows the average number of library books read by second grade students during this time according to their ITBS reading percentile scores:

Table 20

Books Read by Second Grade Students

ITBS PRT	No. Students	Books Read
>75th	6	102
50th-75th	6	55
25th-49th	12	35
<25th	41	21

Sixty-five second grade students participated in a recreational reading program during the 1990-1991 school year. Students scoring above the 75th percentile on the reading portion of the ITBS read an average of 102 library books. Those student who scored between the 50th and the 75th percentile read an average of 55

books. Students who scored below the 25th percentile read an average of 21 books.

This implied that students who scored higher in reading on the ITBS did much more recreational reading than those students who scored lower in reading on the ITBS. The higher the ITBS reading score, the greater the average number of books read for pleasure. Students who could read, did read. Those students who had weak reading skills did not read as much as students who had better reading skills.

During the 1988 - 1989 school year, teachers in kindergarten and first grade questioned students individually to determine the number of books each child personally owned. The following table (Table 21) gives the number of books owned by students:

Table 21

Books Owned by Students

Grade	No. Students	<5	5-10	>10
K	68	29	19	20
1st	78	34	25	19

Teachers reported that students who owned the most books were those children who came from homes of higher socioeconomic status. These children made better grades and scored higher on standardized tests than children who did not own books or who

owned few books. These children, on the average, performed poorly in academic subjects. This indicated that students who did not have books of their own did not have as many opportunities to enrich their lives through books. The children questioned by the teachers would be second graders during the implementation of the project.

In May, 1991, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) was administered to the first and second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School. The following table gives the results of three of the subtests of the SDRT:

Table 22

SDRT - May, 1991

Group	Subtest	N	M%ile Rank
1st Grade	Auditory Vocabulary	67	31.3
2nd Grade	Auditory Vocabulary	65	32.7
1st Grade	Word Reading	67	37.8
2nd Grade	Word Reading	65	29.6
1st Grade	Reading Comprehension	67	33.5
2nd Grade	Reading Comprehension	65	27.4

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test is a group administered instrument that has been used as a screening device for children experiencing reading difficulties. The lowest level (Red) was designed for first and second graders, and it was administered in

May, 1991, to both these grades at Woodbine Elementary School prior to the start of the project. Reading and reading related subtests of the SDRT revealed a pattern of below average achievement. These initial test results were compared to second grade SDRT scores administered in May, 1992, as reported in Tables 23, 24, and 25.

Probable Causes of the Problem

From 1988-1990, the average reading percentile scores on the ITBS for second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School were below the Camden County average and the Georgia average. During this time, Woodbine Elementary School also had the highest number of children in the county who qualified for the free and reduced lunch program. The combination of these two factors indicated that many of the children at Woodbine Elementary School were disadvantaged and considered at-risk students.

Maeroff (1991) reported that there are many shortcomings associated with norm-referenced tests. It was speed and low cost that enabled the norm-referenced test, with its multiple-choice responses, to conquer the world of education and hold it in thrall. Maeroff advocated alternative assessment for students. However, he recognized that students who score poorly on the much-maligned norm-referenced tests with their multiple choice responses are not necessarily going to perform better on the alternatives.

The second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School were

given the ITBS during the 1988-1990 school years. ITBS testing was conducted usually during late April or early May. After the 1989-1990 school year, the ITBS was no longer given to second grade students.

Amspaugh (1990) stated that some standardized tests contained test questions that were written in such a way that even the teachers were not sure which were the right answers. She said that taking standardized tests took a lot of time, time that children could have spent learning to read real books and enjoying practical applications of mathematics and writing.

Means and Knapp (1991) stated that children who score lower than their peers on standardized tests of reading tend to come from poor backgrounds and/or from cultural or linguistic minorities. They also said that classroom studies document the fact that disadvantaged students receive less exposure to print outside of school and family support for education than do their more advantaged peers.

Frymier (1990) reported that children who are retained in grade were much more likely to drop out of school than children who were promoted, and their general achievement in the years ahead was lower than that of students who were promoted. The second part of his statement was supported, in part, by the percentage of retained students enrolled in second through fifth grades at Woodbine

Elementary School (Table 9) who were retained two or more times. Ten percent of these retained students were retained for the second or third time.

Of the students enrolled at the school for the 1990-1991 school year, 17.7% of them were retained one or more times. Of the students retained during 1989 and 1990, 25% of these students were second graders. Smith and Shepard (1987) estimated the overall rate of retention in the United States as being 15% to 19%. The overall retention rate at Woodbine Elementary was consistent with the national rates.

Table 10 shows the classroom teachers by grade at Woodbine Elementary School from 1984 through 1990. It gives the total number of teachers per grade for each year. There were many teachers at the school during these years (Appendix A, page 131). During this period of time, some teachers were moved frequently, others taught in the same grade, and some teachers stayed at the school for just a few years. The turnover of teachers in kindergarten through second grade was examined closely, and one of the probable causes for lower reading achievement of second grade students may have been due to the frequency of teacher turnover in second grade.

From 1984 through 1990, at Woodbine Elementary School there were 9 kindergarten teachers, 11 first grade teachers and 11 second

grade teachers. The average tenure for kindergarten teachers was 2.9 years. First grade teachers had an average tenure of 2.6 years. Second grade teachers had the lowest tenure. They averaged 2.4 years in second grade. The lower tenure of second grade teachers suggests that this may have been a probable cause for the low reading achievement of second grade students.

The reading program was affected by frequent teacher turnover because teachers new to the school had to become acquainted with the basal reading program used at the school. After the initial adoption of a new basal reading series, very little staff development was provided for new teachers on the basal reading program. The lack of continuous staff development in the basal reading series for new teachers suggests a probable cause of low reading achievement of second grade students.

Teacher turnover will continue at Woodbine Elementary School as more students move into the school attendance zone and as the attendance zone for the school changes. For the 1991-1992 school year, approximately 60 additional students attended Woodbine Elementary School.

The students who lived in the attendance zone of Woodbine Elementary School moved into a new facility during the 1991-1992 school year. The new school accommodated more students, and additional teachers were added to the faculty for the 1991-1992

school year.

The number of days teachers were absent from class had a negative effect on instruction. Substitute teachers at the school had little education beyond high school. Everyday a teacher was out of the class, the students lost valuable instructional time. Second grade teachers had the highest absenteeism of all the teachers in the school, which suggests this as a probable cause for the low reading achievement of second grade students.

For the 1990-1991 school year, a new leave policy was approved by the Board of Education that had some effect on the number of days teachers were absent from school. Before the 1990-1991 school year, teachers were allowed to accumulate up to 45 days of sick leave. Since this policy passed, teachers have been able to accumulate an unlimited number of sick days. This new leave policy may have a positive effect on reducing teacher absenteeism. It may also maintain teacher instructional time.

Another factor of the second grade reading problem may have been the number of worksheets that teachers gave to students each year. Table 13 gives the number of sheets photocopied for each teacher in kindergarten through second grade for the 1989-1990 school year. Although not all of the photocopied sheets were necessarily student worksheets, the majority of them were. For these first three grades, the number of worksheets per student per

day increased as the student moved up through the grades.

The reading curriculum was affected by the number of worksheets completed. When students were doing worksheets in reading, they were losing reading instructional time. A child cannot learn to read by doing worksheets. One goal was to increase student recreational and academic reading.

Smith (1992) expressed that children learn from the company they keep, and there are two groups of people that ensure that children learn to read. The first group includes the people who read to children: parents, siblings, friends, and teachers. The second group is composed of the authors of the books that children love to read. The authors help children to recognize written words, and the more written words that children are able to understand, the easier it is for them to learn new words.

It was reported by Smith (1992) that four year-olds learn about 20 new words a day. When they enter school, they know around 10,000 words. When they leave school, they know at least 50,000 words, and perhaps more, depending on how much reading they do.

He also advocated reading to children. He said that reading to children served many purposes. It put children in the company of people who read. It showed them what can be done with reading, and it sparked their interest in the consequences of reading.

The effectiveness of teachers in the classrooms was difficult to

determine. Teacher evaluation forms were examined to determine areas for improvement of individual teachers. The problem with this procedure was that on the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Instrument (GTEI) used by administrators to evaluate classroom performance, it was easy for teachers to receive satisfactory ratings. In addition, the GTEI had only been in existence since 1988, and evaluation forms prior to that time were nonexistent.

According to a paper by Uphoff and Gilmore (1985), when children enter school before they were developmentally ready to cope with it, their chances for failure increased dramatically. The research reviewed by Uphoff and Gilmore showed that children who were less than five years three months of age when enrolled in kindergarten, when compared to children entering kindergarten who were older than five years three months, showed that older children were much more likely to score in the above average range on standardized achievement tests, and the younger children in a grade were far more likely to have failed at least one grade than older children.

The second grade students in Group A and Group B had similar average ages upon entering kindergarten (Table 15). The slight difference in the average ages of the two groups did not appear to have an adverse impact on the problem of low reading achievement of the second grade students.

The number of children who were retained in the two grades

varied considerably. Ten children from Group A were retained one or more times, while only three students from Group B were retained. The majority of these students who were retained failed to meet the reading requirements for promotion.

Woodbine Elementary School students who come from lower socioeconomic conditions made up the largest percentage of students who scored below the 50th and 25th percentiles on the reading portion of the ITBS. One of the probable causes for low reading achievement of second grade students was the low socioeconomic conditions of the families from which many of the lower achieving students came.

The number of days absent for the selected groups of students is given in Table 18. The average number of days absent for each group was almost equal. Attendance did not appear to be a probable cause of the low reading achievement of second grade students.

Although heterogeneous grouping of students in the classroom had occurred at Woodbine Elementary School from 1988 through 1990, students were grouped for reading according to their ability. Ability grouping in reading did not allow low reading achieving students to experience reading modeling by their peers who were better readers.

The Camden County Schools adopted a different basal reading series for the 1991-1992 school year. During the 1986-1987

school year, a reading policy requirement was added to the Board of Education's policies for the Camden County Schools. For promotion of students, all reading policy requirements must have been met. Each grade was assigned a minimum level to complete in the basal reading series.

Another probable cause for low reading achievement by second grade students was related to the number of books they read. Students who did not read well did not read as many books as children who were better readers. Students who performed poorly on reading tests tended to do little recreational reading compared to students who were better readers.

Another probable cause for low reading achievement was related to the number of books students personally owned. Over 43% of the students in kindergarten and first grade owned fewer than five books. Students who owned books had greater opportunities to improve their reading skills than children who did not own any books. It also implied that someone in the families of these students were concerned enough about reading to have purchased books for their children.

The probable causes of low reading achievement of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School were difficult to ascertain. But the most prevalent causes were related to the low socioeconomic status of many of the families from which the

majority of the children came. Families of low socioeconomic status were unable to provide books for their children; therefore, these children did not have as many opportunities for improving their reading skills as did children who came from families who provided books for their children. Other probable causes were related to the placement of students in reading groups. Children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds were, many times, grouped together and, therefore, did not have opportunities to associate with students who were better readers.

Cuban (1989) reported that parents of children from poor families and certain cultural backgrounds failed to prepare their children for school and provided little support for them in school. Parents of many of the children from Woodbine Elementary School were not involved in the education of their sons and daughters, and this could have been one of the causes of low reading achievement.

Another probable cause of low reading achievement by second grade students was related to the reading instructional program provided by teachers from kindergarten through second grade. Teachers used much of the instructional time by having students complete worksheets. Worksheets were not necessarily the problem, because there was a place for worksheets. According to second grade lesson plans, the completion of worksheets occupied approximately 50% of reading instructional time. The second grade

teachers said that their use of worksheets was related to the basal reading series. Interviews with second grade teachers implied that students should do more reading.

The reading portion of the ITBS was analyzed for individual students by examining performance profiles. Reading was subdivided on the ITBS into three categories: facts; interferences; and generalizations. The results of the analysis, along with teacher interviews, indicated that second grade students did not do enough reading.

Chapter 3

Problem Situation and Context

Written Policies, Procedures, and Commentaries

On July 1, 1986, a comprehensive approach to improving education in Georgia, the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE), became effective. The overriding purpose of QBE was to insure that:

each student was provided ample opportunity to develop competencies necessary for lifelong learning, as well as the competencies needed to maintain good physical and mental health, to participate actively in governing process and community activities, to protect the environment and conserve public and private resources, and to be an effective worker and responsible citizen. (p. 5).

QBE addressed a statewide basic curriculum framework, and it was a helping influence in that each of the public schools in Georgia was required to adhere to the Reform Act. To insure the uniform adherence to QBE by public schools in Georgia, the Georgia Board of Education (GBOE) supervised a comprehensive evaluation of each local school system and each public school on a periodic basis. One component of the comprehensive evaluation system was the Public School Standards program. The application of Standards assessed a

system's or a school's compliance with state law and GBOE policy and rules.

The Public School Standards were a helping influence because the Standards were indicators of legal adherence to the QBE Act, and schools must function within state laws. In the event that a school did not meet a certain standard, the evaluation process allowed the school to make adjustments to its program to meet the standard.

The Quality Core Curriculum (QCC) was part of QBE. The QCC provided students opportunities to experience a continuum of activities with appropriate emphasis in each instructional area: fine arts, foreign language, health, language arts, mathematics, physical education, science, social studies, and vocational education. The QCC for language arts, which included reading, was a helping influence because all Georgia's public school children could expect to be taught the same core content regardless of their geographic location or the economic conditions of the school district. The QCC objectives in language arts for second grade were given to all the second grade teachers (Appendix B, page 133).

One part of Standards that was a hindering influence was the standard dealing with curriculum guides. The standard applying to curriculum guides stated: "A locally approved curriculum guide existed for each subject and/or course offered for which the system earned FTE funding" (p. 66). The system approved the state

curriculum guides to meet this standard. The state curriculum guide in language arts was published in 1984, and it has not been revised since then. The language arts curriculum guide that was used to meet Standards was published before the QBE act was passed in 1986.

Another written policy that affected the reading program at Woodbine Elementary School was the standard relating to remedial education. This standard stated: "A remedial education program for eligible children in grades two through five and in grades nine through twelve was established and implemented" (p. 83). The standard about remedial education was viewed as being both a helping influence and a constraining influence in the reading program at Woodbine Elementary School.

Remedial education was available to second grade students who, during the month of March of their experience in first grade, scored below the 25th percentile on the reading portion of the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests. A constraining factor was that eligibility for remedial education in reading was determined by student performance on a single test. It was a helping influence in identifying children who needed remediation in reading, but it also identified children for remediation who did not necessarily need it.

Another written policy that had an effect on the second grade reading program was the Chapter 1 program. Chapter 1 of the

Educational Consolidation and Improvement Act (ECIA) was a federally funded program which was designed to meet the identified needs of the educationally deprived children in eligible Chapter 1 schools. Woodbine Elementary School was an eligible Chapter 1 school because of the high percentage of children who were below grade level in reading and mathematics in second through fifth grades. Since Woodbine Elementary School was a Chapter 1 school, an educational program in reading had to be designed to meet the special needs of the children who qualified for Chapter 1 services.

This was a helping influence, in that the identified children in reading received special help from a teacher who had been designated to teach Chapter 1 reading. The classes were small, with a maximum of 12 students in each class, and the Chapter 1 teacher was provided additional funds to purchase supplementary materials for instruction. The students stayed with the Chapter 1 teacher for all components of language arts. It was a hindering influence because the children were homogeneously grouped.

A limiting factor was the county reading policy requirement. This policy stated that for a child to be promoted to the next grade, a minimum level in the HBJ Bookmark Reading Program must have been met. This was the policy that caused most of the children who were retained each year, from first to fifth grades, to repeat their grade or attend summer school. It was a hindering influence because

teachers set their expectations for their students based on this policy. The teachers used the minimum reading requirements as their maximum expectations for the students in their classrooms. Once a child completed the minimum reading requirements, that child had met the teacher's expectations, and then the teacher concentrated on helping other children who had not met the minimum reading requirements.

Norms for Behavior, Values, Traditions

One tradition at Woodbine Elementary School that affected the reading program was the grouping of students for reading. Teachers in all grades at the school had traditionally grouped students according to their reading ability. The homogeneous grouping of students for reading started with the students who had been identified as being qualified for Chapter 1 reading and/or the Remedial Education Program (REP). Most of the students who qualified for REP, which was state funded, also qualified for Chapter 1 reading, which was federally funded.

In second grade, one of the teachers was designated as the REP teacher for the year. This designation changed from year to year so that, as tradition went, each teacher would have an opportunity to work with the lowest group of readers. During reading, students who were REP/Chapter 1 either stayed with the REP teacher or moved to the Chapter 1 teacher for the language arts instruction.

This movement of REP/Chapter 1 students created the formation of two classes of language arts which had a reduced number of students in each of them compared to the other second grade classes. The average number of students in REP/Chapter 1 class was 12 or 13. The regular classes of second grade students usually averaged over 26 students each. Students in the other second grade classes were grouped according to ability, with each teacher having two or three groups. Each teacher usually had high, average, and low groups for reading.

Another factor regarding REP students was the number who were eligible for REP reading. In the 1989-1990 school year, there were 43 students who qualified for REP reading. Not all of them returned to Woodbine Elementary School for the 1990-1991 school year, but the majority of them did. The number of REP students exceeded the number that could be placed with the REP teacher or Chapter 1 teacher during the block for language arts. Therefore, the other second grade teachers were required to provide reading remediation for the REP students in their language arts classes.

Formal and Informal Influences of Individuals and Groups

One hindering factor in the improvement of the reading program in second grade at Woodbine Elementary School was the pressure teachers felt to improve reading and mathematics scores of their students on standardized tests. The standardized reading and

mathematics scores received more attention than the scores in social studies and science. From 1988 through 1990, at Woodbine Elementary School, teachers in each grade level received an analysis of the standardized reading and mathematics scores from the test coordinator.

Another hindering factor in the improvement of reading in second grade had been the failure of second grade teachers to actively plan together. Evidence of this came from lesson plans and observations. A good example was the contrast between the planning of teachers in kindergarten and those teaching in second grade. The kindergarten teachers at Woodbine Elementary School met weekly to coordinate their classroom instruction. They developed lesson plans together and shared ideas and teaching methods. On the other hand, second grade teachers were planning independently until the principal instructed them to meet weekly and plan together.

The students who were in second grade homerooms were not the same group of students that the second grade teachers taught for language arts. Students moved from the homeroom for instruction in language arts. Therefore, it was important for the second grade teachers to plan together for instruction.

Another influence that had been a hindrance to improving reading instruction, not only in second grade but in all grades, was the informal power of the older established teachers. This was a small

group of 5 or 6 teachers who had been teaching at Woodbine for over 15 years and who were reluctant to change their teaching methods. To reduce the informal power of this small group of veteran teachers, many of them were reassigned to other grades for the 1990-1991 school year. The reassignment of teachers for the 1990-1991 school year resulted in a different distribution of teachers in most grades (Appendix C, page 137). These changes were made to strengthen the instructional program in the various grades.

For the 1991-1992 school year, seven teachers were scheduled to be transferred from other elementary schools in Camden County to Woodbine Elementary School. There were more teachers requesting a transfer to Woodbine Elementary School than to any other elementary school in the system. Because of the high number of teacher transfer requests to move to Woodbine Elementary School from other schools in the system, teachers from outside the system had less of an opportunity to be employed at the school.

External Circumstances

One external constraint that affected the effort to improve the reading program at Woodbine Elementary School was the low socioeconomic status of many of the children who attended the school. Fifty-nine percent of the children who attended Woodbine Elementary School qualified for the free or reduced price lunch program. Many of these children also participated in the breakfast

program at the school. The low socioeconomic status of these children could not be changed, but the faculty and staff had a professional mandate to provide the very best instruction for these children, and that included improving the reading program at the school.

The lack of low socioeconomic parental participation in the school program was another external constraint. During the 1990-1991 school year, 38 students in kindergarten and first grade qualified for the SIA program. Thirty of these children came from families of low socioeconomic circumstances according to school records from the lunch program. The teachers were required to contact the parents of the SIA students, and they had these parents come to the school for a minimum of three conferences during the school year. The parents of the students from low socioeconomic circumstances came in for conferences only 40% of the time, while parents of the other children who qualified for the SIA program came for all three conferences.

This external constraint was addressed as part of the solution to improving the reading of the disadvantaged youths. Efforts were made to involve parents in the education of their children in an attempt to improve the children's reading.

Construction on the new Woodbine Elementary School started during January 1991. The old school dated from 1926. The new

school was located approximately two miles from the old site, and it was ready for occupancy during the middle of the 1991-1992 school term. Construction delays moved the opening date. The 1991-1992 school year began in the old plant.

The new Woodbine Elementary School had a positive impact on the community and the students who attended the school. The faculty and staff at the school were motivated by having a new facility. There were new equipment, additional storage space, and a different atmosphere. The media center was much larger, and more services were provided to students and teachers that were formerly denied because of a lack of space.

More students and more teachers were at the school because of the new facility. The assignment of the new teachers and the reassignment of experienced teachers changed the atmosphere in the different grades that were affected. The reassignment of teachers continued in order to provide the optimum level of instruction, not only in reading, but in other subjects, too.

Chapter 4

Problem Conceptualization, Outcomes, and the Solution Strategy

Bibliographic Research and Review of Literature

The review of the literature revealed several categories that were relevant to improving the reading program. The categories revolved around what the principal, teachers, and parents could do to improve reading, not only at school, but at home, too.

Finn and McKinney (1986) gave several examples of how principals could improve reading. One principal visited each class and read aloud to the students. This principal also asked the teachers to read aloud every day to the students, and the principal wrote a letter to parents encouraging them to read aloud to their children.

Another suggestion from Finn and McKinney was that the principal could establish a reading climate in the school by stressing the importance of reading. One suggestion was to invite persons in the community to talk about their occupations, such as a detective who might get the children interested in reading whodunits. Another way for principals to encourage reading was for children to make a paper caterpillar grow from their classroom to

the principal's office. The caterpillar started out with just a head. Each time a student read a book, a segment was added to its body. When the caterpillar reached the principal's office, the children received rewards.

Finn and McKinney also advocated reading aloud by both teacher and child. Teachers who read good stories whetted the appetites of their students for reading, and good teachers gave their students lots of opportunities to read aloud. The authors also supported independent reading. They reported that independent reading contributes significantly to reading achievement gains. However, students in a typical primary school class generally spent only 40 minutes a week on this type of reading.

One other important area that the authors covered was workbook activities. They stated that most students spent up to 70 percent of their reading time on workbook activities, but there was little evidence that such activities improved reading skills. A suggestion was made to cut the amount of time spent on workbook activities and concentrate on reading.

Marinez, Vernon, Allen and Teale (1991) reported on what principals could do to promote voluntary reading. They said that to become proficient readers, children must practice reading. Children typically spent approximately one hour a day on reading practice, but most of that time was devoted to completing worksheets and

workbook pages. Children should spend the majority of their seatwork time reading.

The authors gave the principal the responsibility for promoting voluntary reading. The principal must inform the teachers about the value of voluntary reading to children's growth as readers. The children needed access to books in the classroom. The principal and the librarian could establish procedures for teachers to check out sets of books for their classrooms. The principal could encourage teachers to use public libraries to check out sets of books for their classrooms, too. The authors also stated that the principal could encourage teachers in all grades to read aloud to their students. By reading aloud, the teacher served as a positive role model for reading.

Additional suggestions from the authors included the principal promoting voluntary reading by sending congratulatory notes to parents, noting individual reading accomplishments. The principal could also arrange for a period of free reading time to be set aside each day. The principal could take the lead in initiating parent/child reading partnerships, in which parents agreed to read aloud to their children for 15 minutes a day, at least 5 days a week. The principal could also invite members of the community into the classrooms to read to or with the children for 30 minutes. Having an adult read aloud was a treat for the children.

A study by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) gave characteristics of highly effective elementary school reading programs. They developed a model that described how high expectations for student achievement were translated into school policies and practices. The schools they studied were considered instructionally effective based on their performance on an annual statewide test.

Some of their findings showed a number of common school practices that supported reading instruction. They found a high level of coordination between classrooms, not only at particular grade levels, but across grades. The schools had written policies regarding the amount of time spent on instruction each day. Teachers integrated related reading activities into instruction in other subjects, such as writing, science and social studies. Teachers did not limit the reading instruction to the basal series. Teachers had developed extended literature series to supplement or replace basal series to meet student needs.

The authors also reported that students frequently had free time to read, and all classrooms had a wide variety of books at various levels of difficulty and were easily accessible. One school implemented a program in which the whole school spent the first 15 minutes after lunch reading silently. Students kept logs of the books they read, and they earned small rewards and public recognition for reaching milestones in numbers of books and pages

read.

Other reading activities included assigning homework that focused on reading. Homework was assigned by all teachers every week night. Students were expected to read every night, even if no homework was specifically assigned.

Basal reading series came under attack by several authors. In making improvement in the reading program, the effect of using a basal reading series must be examined. Although basal reading series will continue to be the dominant means by which reading is taught, teachers must become aware of the limitations of basal readers.

Breaking away from the basal readers was advocated by Bingham and Allen (1986). They encouraged teachers to make their own decisions about when to use, or not to use, basal readers. They said that basal readers were popular because they were easy to manage. Teachers used them like cookbooks; they follow the recipe.

The authors suggested the principal go into the classroom to help children enrich the basal materials through writing, speaking, and listening activities. They also suggested having a Read-In-Day where local VIP's were invited to participate in the reading program.

An article by Cadenhead (1987) gave examples of teachers breaking away from basal readers. One primary teacher decided to use the basal program only four days a week. On the fifth day, the

children were grouped according to types of literature. Books were selected of different types that were appropriate for children with a range of reading abilities. Through this approach, children read several books on their own. The children were led through different kinds of literature, and at the same time, the requirements of teaching the basal were met.

Another teacher grouped children around four themes in children's literature. Books varying in difficulty were selected on each theme. Children read the books, had individual conferences with the teacher, and participated in discussion groups in which questions calling for analysis and synthesis were stressed. After a few weeks, some children read from all themes.

Cadenhead stated that teachers must be freed from the slavish adherence to basal programs and be encouraged to make decisions about children's performances. Teachers should encourage children to read materials of varying difficulty, rather than lead the children through programs based on a theme of control instead of challenge.

In a research study by Fry and Sakiey (1986), they found that basal readers did not always teach the most common words. Their criterion was 3000 of the most common English words, and they surveyed five major American basal series. They found that the highest percentage of these common words taught by any of the basals was 59%. The lowest percentage taught was 50%. They

suggested that teachers should supplement the basal readers and encourage students to do much extra reading.

Lehman and Crook (1988) gave a rationale for children's literature in the curriculum. They reported that through literature, children were exposed to written language at its best and in its many forms, unlike many basal reading series. For example, six primary basal reading series were analyzed for story structure; 87% of the stories fell into three categories: confrontation with a problem, episodic and plotless. Significantly, more stories fell into the plotless category for those series which heavily emphasized decoding skills. If exposure to story structure facilitated prediction and comprehension, then predictable, natural-language children's books were more appropriate than plotless, decoding-oriented basal selections. The authors said that including children's books in the curriculum could increase teacher effectiveness.

High-interest reading material was important in promoting a good reading program. The use of reading material other than the basal readers could provide high-interest. Several authors reported that the use of high-interest reading material had positive effects.

Holbrook (1988) wrote about sex differences in reading. She said that the research had shown that girls read better than boys through elementary school, and they tended to have higher reading scores. However, boys scored as well as girls on material they rated as

highly interesting, but scored below girls on materials of low interest.

In a paper about phonics, Carbo (1987) said that phonics did not always work. She said that phonics, however simple and quickly taught, could not work for all students. Phonics should be taught early, simply, and it should be completed by the end of second grade.

Carbo also said that no single reading method was appropriate for every child. Poor readers needed to be taught using high-interest reading materials, instead of relying primarily on the visual and auditory methods now taught.

Teachers were a key factor to improving the reading program. The literature revealed several articles or studies that suggested ways teachers could make a positive difference in the reading program.

An article by Nessell (1987) suggested ways teachers could better approach asking comprehension questions. The author suggested a questioning strategy that focused on prediction as a powerful tool for developing and enhancing comprehension at all grade levels. According to Nessell, the teacher must identify one or two major turning points in each story and use these as discussion starters. During the discussions, the teacher must encourage disagreement by playing devil's advocate, and the teacher must press students to use evidence from the text to justify their

predictions. The goal was to elicit good reasoning.

Pinnell (1990) reported that success for low achievers in reading could be accomplished by providing intensive one-to-one tutoring for 30 minutes each day, in addition to classroom instruction. This intensive tutoring program included procedures for teaching children, recommended materials, and a staff development program directed by a reading specialist. The goal for this system was to help children learn to use what they knew to get to what they did not know.

An article by Miller and Gildea (1987) discussed how children learn words. According to the authors, the average child learned at the rate of 5000 words per year, or about 13 per day. Children with large vocabularies probably picked up new words at twice that rate. In school, children were taught about 100 to 200 words per year; therefore, learning was far ahead of teaching. The authors maintained that many of the words learned were acquired through reading. The best way to facilitate vocabulary growth in school children was to have them read as much as possible.

A study by Peterman (1988) showed that many teachers may be aware of the benefits to be derived from reading stories to children, but they did not know how to present the stories to the children. The author said that teachers could be trained to plan and implement effective presentations which have a positive, significant effect on

children's understanding. She suggested that teachers discuss experiences the children have had that are similar to the ones in the story, and teachers should ask children to make predictions about the story based on their own experiences.

A research study by Klug (1986) focused on an approach of using children's literature in the classroom to promote optimum development of students' appreciation and involvement in literature. The author gave steps for the teacher to use in reading stories to children, the first of which was to prepare the listeners for this listening experience. The second step was the actual reading, telling, or dramatizing a story. The concluding stage incorporated aspects of collecting or creating objects to extend the story presented to help children recall the stories they had heard.

Including storytelling in the reading program was promoted by Nessel (1985). She said that storytelling invited listeners to imagine, to create mentally the picture that made the story vivid and meaningful. Storytelling was an effective way to forge the link between listening and reading, two facets of the complex process of comprehension.

Nessel gave a list of procedures for learning a story: 1), Choose a story you especially like and want to tell: 2), Read the story a few times until you are familiar with it: 3), Study the story structure: 4), Visualize the story from beginning to end, picture all the rich

details of the settings, bring the characters and action to life with your own imagination, play the story out in your mind: 5), Go back to the book and read the story aloud with expression: 6), Close the book and tell the story again, using your voice to bring the characters and action to life as you imagine them.

An article by Morrow (1985) stated that retelling stories was another activity procedure that may aid comprehension, concept of story structure, and oral language. Several studies showed that active involvement in different forms of storytelling facilitated language growth.

A study by Karweit (1989) described the development of a story-reading program and its effects on the language and comprehension of disadvantaged prekindergarteners and kindergarten children. The results of the story-telling were positive.

The author stated that story reading in school situations had been shown to increase children's vocabulary, awareness of print, and comprehension skills. She pointed out that in a typical classroom usage, story time may not contain many of the elements that make story reading successful; that is, high verbal interaction between adult and child, physical closeness of materials and print, and the chance for the child to ask questions or provide interpretation of the story as it progresses. Frequently, teachers will simply read a story and then assign a follow-up art activity, with little opportunity for

students to actively participate in the story or to reconstruct it.

Cliatt and Shaw (1988) reported that children who were read to became better listeners. Listening to stories could also help children to develop better listening skills. As they thought about the stories they heard, children learned about logical thinking, cause-and-effect relationships and sequencing. Stories expanded children's experiences and helped them to develop rich imagining skills. They also enabled children to begin to understand the feelings of others. An adult could tell stories to children, or children could tell stories to adults or to each other. Storytelling helped children develop their receptive and expressive language skills. The authors promoted the use of props to enhance storytelling. By using props, teachers could add extra interest and variety to stories. Props could be as simple as an overhead projector to create interesting, bold effects for storytelling, or the props could be more elaborate, such as costumes and life-sized story characters.

The search of the literature revealed several articles concerning giving incentives to children to help promote reading. The use of such incentives seemed to be a common practice in many schools.

Several samples of reading incentive programs were given by McGinnis, Moore, Morgan, and McGrath (1986). One incentive reading program was publicized by providing laminated table tents to local

restaurants listing reasons for parents to read aloud to their children. One school had a Century Reading Club of students who became members when they read over a hundred books. Members of the Century Reading Club scored an average of one year higher on reading achievement tests than nonmembers. Another school had a corporation donate a book to the school library when a child read 12 books and discussed them with an adult volunteer. The donated book had a bookplate naming the child as the donor.

McGrath (1987) reported a reading incentive program. Through the Reading Incentive Program, students who read and reported on a book received a certificate redeemable at a local ice cream store. When a student completed 12 books, a new books was placed in the school library with a bookplate announcing it as a gift of that reader.

Starting the day with a good book was the theme for a reading lab started by Distad (1987). A reading lab was opened 20 minutes before the morning bell. A series of incentives were developed to maintain student interest. After 15 visits to the lab, students received a bookmark. Another 35 visits earned them a button; 50 more entitled them to a book; and readers who continued in the program were rewarded with a surprise party. Another component of the reading lab was to stamp the students' hands, so that they could show classmates and teachers that they had visited the lab.

The involvement of parents in the education of their children, especially in reading, was the topic of many articles and studies found in the search of the literature. One of the methods of improving reading that was repeated in the literature was reading aloud to children by their parents.

Parent participation in the school was promoted by Comer (1986). He said programs that involved parents in the schools could play a major role in creating a desirable context for teaching and learning. Comer pointed out that there were obstructions in the way of parent participation in the schools. Many schools simply did not want parents present, and many parents were reluctant to become involved, as well. One important aspect of Comer's findings was that parent participation in a well-structured, well-managed program could help eliminate harmful stereotypes that staff members may harbor about the community served by the school. Another aspect that Comer found was that many of the parents who participated in school programs become energized and returned to school to finish their own education.

An article by Rasinski and Fredericks (1991) looked at a reading project pairing parents with children. Paired reading allowed parents to provide structured practice in contextual reading for their children. In paired reading, parents read along with their children in a book of their child's choosing. The authors stated that

children engaged in paired reading for only 5 to 15 minutes a day made significant gains in fluency and comprehension.

In this reading project, teachers made home visits to train parents who could not attend the training sessions held in the school. After the training, parents and their children signed contracts in which they agreed to engage in paired reading. During the program, parents and children read one book chosen by the child each week. Children chose books from their schools and libraries that appealed to them and were consistent with their reading levels.

In their evaluation of paired reading, teachers found parents overwhelmingly positive. Many of the parents said that paired reading not only improved reading performance, it also helped to improve children's desire to read and strengthened the bond of affection between parents and children.

Rich (1985) said that parents could be helped in order to help their children learn. She promoted a home involvement program, but she said it could not work without support from teachers and administrators.

According to Rich, one way the school could help was to send home learning activities for the parents and children to do together. Another way was to distribute home learning activities at workplaces, churches, gas stations, and grocery stores. She said that parent involvement must be viewed as a legitimate activity of

the school, and reaching the family must be considered as important as reaching the child.

Effective parent practices were reported by Becher (1985). She said that reading to the child was the best-known, most researched, and most frequently recommended parental practice that was significantly related to positive attitudes towards reading and reading achievement. Parents were more likely to seriously value reading to their child if teachers pointed out the specific benefits to be gained from this activity. Many parents were surprised to learn that reading to the child had been shown to significantly increase children's listening and speaking vocabularies, letter and symbol recognition abilities, length of spoken sentences, literal and inferential comprehension skills, number and nature of concepts developed, interests in books and reading, and view of reading as a valued activity.

Becher indicated that children whose parents read to them on a regular basis, that is, at least four times a week and preferably daily, for 8-10 minutes at a time, exhibited more positive attitudes and higher achievement levels in reading than did children whose parents did not read to them. Another finding from Becher was that parents who initiated talks with their children about the books they were reading had children with significantly higher reading achievement scores and more highly developed and expanded

concepts than children whose parents did not.

Becher's implication was in order for parents to be effectively involved in promoting reading to their children, teachers needed to be specific in their requests and recommendations. They needed to discuss the amount of time that should be invested, and they needed to take particular care in explaining that this process should be a cognitive or thinking activity for the child rather than a listening activity. Teachers needed to develop specific examples of questions to ask and points to discuss for some of the children's favorite books and give them to parents. Teachers should also provide information to parents about high-interest, worthwhile reading material. They could provide a list of resource materials on children's books which parents could use as a reference and guide in assisting their children in selecting books. Teachers could assist parents in developing effective reading instruction techniques, including appropriate ways of listening to their child read.

Another of Becher's findings was that children with more positive attitudes and higher achievement levels in reading came from homes in which there was a wide range of reading materials available.

A study by Clary (1989) showed that parents should become involved in their children's efforts to learn to read. She said that parents must set examples, and they must follow up on reading and

become part of the instructional program in their child's school. She promoted parents reading to their children.

Clary gave suggestions for teaching children to read by doing things with books. These things could be fun activities, such as having a neighborhood book characters' parade or writing family plays about books. She suggested that parents help youngsters write and bind their own books. The final responsibility she gave parents was for them to find out about, participate in, evaluate, and make requests of the instructional program in their child's school.

In a paper presented by Dwyer and Isbell (1988), the authors reported that reading aloud to children provided opportunities for introducing children to good literature and encouraged language development. Through hearing stories and even factual information from books, children could substantially increase awareness of the world around them. Reading to children enhanced their vocabularies. This was particularly true for children from homes where experiential background in language was limited.

The authors stated that the reading program should contain three parts: direct instruction, sustained silent reading and reading aloud. They concluded by giving components of oral reading: 1), an effective lead-in; 2), eye contact; 3), adequate volume and clear enunciation; 4), logical phrasing; 5), a sense of drama; and 6), enthusiasm.

Griffin (1988) promoted reading aloud to students by inviting

community leaders to participate in Read Aloud Week. Over 100 community leaders participated in this program in a Massachusetts community. Griffin reported that reading aloud to children strengthened their language development, the growth of their imagination, and their love of literature.

A research study by Haney (1988) reviewed the research on the value of reading aloud to others. Haney said that reading aloud not only produced growth in language development, vocabulary, and comprehension, but in the attitudes of children toward reading. There was evidence of the direct relationship between reading aloud to children and their reading performance, language development and development of reading interests.

Haney found that reading aloud was more effective with children in the lower socioeconomic status, and that the children at the lowest extremes of reading achievement showed the most growth in reading scores. She also found that regardless of the child's socioeconomic status, the children that were read aloud to in the home had higher achievement scores in all aspects of reading.

A study by Radecki (1987) examined the literature for the importance of adults reading aloud to children. Radecki reported that studies over the past 30 years had consistently shown that adults reading aloud to children positively affected or correlated highly with children's reading ability, both in the cognitive and

affective domains.

Radecki made the following recommendations: 1), Reading by adults be made part of each elementary school day: 2), Schools should prepare a plan to train, evaluate, and schedule students who volunteer to read to younger pupils: 3), Reading aloud workshops should be made available to the parents of all children in the elementary schools.

A research study by Rustin (1989) was designed to increase the amount of time parents read to their kindergarten children. Parents selected for the study participated in a series of teacher-presented workshops to discover the value of reading aloud, learning strategies for presenting literature, and practicing reading aloud to their children. The results of the study indicated that presenting workshops for parents would help them increase the amount of time they read aloud to their children. The presentation of the workshops enhanced parents' knowledge of reading aloud. This promoted the increase in the amount of time that parents read to their children.

A guide developed by Daly (1987) provided suggestions and activities that parents could follow at home to help their children read. The author stated that regularly reading aloud to and with children was an important way for parents to help improve children's reading, writing and thinking skills, and, at the same time, enhance the parent-child bond.

A study by Miller (1986) reviewed research on parent involvement in reading and discovered positive ways in which parents could participate in promoting reading achievement with their children. Results of the study indicated that children's achievement can be increased through parental involvement. Parent attitude surveys revealed that most parents want to be involved in their children's education. Reading to children and listening to them were found to be the most significant ways parents could increase their children's achievement.

A descriptive study by Watt (1989) examined whether reading aloud to children regularly, beginning at infancy, would have an effect on their future disposition to reading. A questionnaire was sent home with 487 kindergarten through fifth grade students. The results of the study showed that a strong background of being read aloud to, beginning during infancy, had several positive effects. Among them were stronger and more positive attitudes toward books, a larger scope of reading materials, and the introduction of more involved reading matter at earlier ages than their peers.

Roser (1989) gave specific suggestions, based on research, to help parents encourage their children to become readers. She said that parents should read to children regularly, and they should continue to read to them once they learn to read. They should talk to their children about what was read. Roser also suggested that

parents should make sure that children had their own books.

An article by Smith (1988) gave facts about the impact parents had on their child's reading. Smith reported that the most powerful influence on children's success in elementary school was the amount of time they saw their parents reading. Parents build images in the minds of children. The parent becomes a visual model for the children to imitate.

Smith said that most parents needed help in knowing how to encourage their children to read. The school needs to provide the direction and encouragement to parents to help them know what to do about their children's reading.

A study by Sullivan (1988) examined whether reading aloud to kindergarten children on a regular basis had an effect on their attention span. Results indicated that the read aloud treatment to kindergarten children five times per week had a positive effect on their test scores relating to auditory memory and attention span. The results also showed that reading habits in the home affected the child in positive ways.

A study by Prater (1985) showed that many children were spending a full day in child care centers while working parents were contending with time pressures and limited opportunities to interact with their children. The author suggested that, since many children spend more daytime hours in preschool settings than with

their parents, child care workers must share the responsibility for introducing young children to the joy available in good books. Staff members needed to know quality literature and make books readily accessible to children and parents.

Data Gathered Through Consulting with Others

An on-site visit to Woodbine Elementary School by Fueyo (1991) provided feedback on the children who were at-risk in the primary grades. Fueyo suggested that the reading improvement program be concentrated in grades kindergarten through second. She said that the data from the Georgia Criterion Referenced Tests would no longer be of much use for charting the progress of first grade students. The Georgia CRT would be eliminated from use in first grade starting in 1991, and it would no longer be available. Fueyo suggested using the ITBS, which is administered to all second graders throughout the state, as the measurement standard for determining reading improvement of second grade students. She said the ITBS would also continue to be administered to all fourth grade students in Georgia, and the reading progress of second grade students could be determined after two years by comparing their reading ITBS scores from fourth grade with their second grade reading scores.

Holland (1991) met with the principal to discuss a concept paper

submitted to the Innovation Program which addressed the Georgia Board of Education's educational improvement priority: Increasing the rate of school completion by students. This program, when funded, will provide free books to students in kindergarten through second grade at Woodbine Elementary School whose parents participate in workshops that will teach them how they can help their children with reading. Holland suggested using Fueyo to conduct one of the workshops for the parents.

McKenna (1991) met with the principal concerning the Innovation Program. He was concerned about the evaluation design for the program. Although the Innovation Program grant for Woodbine Elementary School will be funded based on preventing school dropouts, the grant proposal was written by the principal as an early intervention program. The Georgia Department of Education did not want to wait for 10 to 12 years to determine if this program will help keep students in school until they graduate. McKenna suggested using test scores to evaluate the reading progress of the students in the lower grades. He also suggested that the degree of participation by the parents may be a factor used to determine progress.

The principal contacted Christmas (1991) about conducting a workshop for the teachers and paraprofessionals at Woodbine Elementary School on effective read aloud techniques. She was excited about the reading improvement program planned, and she

gave several examples of things that could be done with the teachers and the paraprofessionals.

The principal and the media specialist met with Trelease (1991) about the reading improvement program planned for the school. Trelease was asked the best ways to get parents involved in a read aloud program. He said that if parents understood the benefits their children would receive from being read aloud to, there should not be much of a problem getting them involved. He said that once the reading improvement program started, other parents would hear about it, and the number of parents reading aloud to their children should increase.

Trelease gave another suggestion about children reading. He said that parents should provide a reading lamp at the bedside of their children. Parents should tell their children that they can stay up 30 minutes longer if they read a book. He said that most children will read if they can stay up longer.

Practicum Outcomes

The objectives for the reading improvement program at Woodbine Elementary were directed at the administration, teachers, students, and parents. The objectives were as follows:

1. As a result of intervention from July 1, 1991, the beginning of the project, through January 31, 1993, the

second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving a read aloud program will increase their auditory vocabulary percentile from 32.7 to 40.9, as measured by the SDRT auditory vocabulary subtest.

2. As a result of intervention from July 1, 1991, the beginning of the project, through January 31, 1993, the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving a read aloud program will increase their reading comprehension percentile from 27.4 to 34.3, as measured by the SDRT reading comprehension subtest.
3. As a result of intervention from July 1, 1991, the beginning of the project, through January 31, 1993, the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving a read aloud program will increase their word reading percentile from 29.6 to 37.0, as measured by the SDRT word reading subtest.

For all three objectives, the SDRT was administered by classroom teachers to the first and second graders at Woodbine Elementary School during May 1991. Of the entire battery, the Auditory Vocabulary, the Word Reading, and the Reading Comprehension subtests were used in order to provide baseline data in the areas of children's vocabulary and reading ability.

For the objective to improve the auditory vocabulary or listening

ability, the SDRT Auditory Vocabulary subtest was given. While ostensibly limited to vocabulary, this instrument required students to comprehend entire sentences before responding and, therefore, provided an adequate index of listening ability. The SDRT Word Reading and Reading Comprehension subtests were given to measure students' reading ability. These subtests were administered to provide overall indicators of the project's effectiveness at increasing reading achievement.

Proposal Solution Components

To improve the reading program at Woodbine Elementary School and to increase student performance on the SDRT Auditory Vocabulary, Word Reading and Reading Comprehension subtests, strategies were developed to attack the root of the problem. Research had shown that one of the best ways to increase student reading performance was to get parents involved in the reading program of the school. One of the main focal points of the reading improvement program was parental involvement, but other strategies were also initiated.

The principal played a major role in the efforts to improve reading. One of the first things accomplished by the principal was the staffing of classrooms for instruction. Although every principal determines where teachers will be placed for instruction, it was

very important that the professional staff be assigned to the grades most suitable for them and for the students they taught. The assignment of teaching responsibilities was made by the principal, with the interests and needs of the students being the most crucial factor.

Grouping for reading was a responsibility of both principal and the teachers. The principal's role was to group students heterogeneously in each grade. No longer were the lowest achieving students in a grade placed in one homeroom, as had been the practice at Woodbine Elementary School in the past. For reading instruction, students in second through fifth grades moved to either a Chapter 1 teacher or a homeroom teacher. Individual teachers determined their reading students.

The principal determined school policies that affected the reading program. For example, a period of sustained silent reading for fifteen minutes for all students was required as part of the efforts to improve reading. Students and teachers were allowed to read for pleasure during this time.

Grade level meetings were required each week for all grades. Those teachers in grades two through five invited the appropriate Chapter 1 teachers to their grade level meetings. The grade chairperson turned in weekly reports of the grade level meetings to the principal.

As a role model for reading, the principal read aloud weekly to groups of students. This activity was coordinated with the teachers and the media specialist. The principal would read to students either in classrooms or the media center.

As the instructional leader in the school, the principal promoted the read aloud program, especially the benefits children receive by having parents read aloud to them. The principal spoke to the PTA, community clubs, professional groups and other organizations about the read aloud program at Woodbine Elementary School.

Reading workshops were held for the kindergarten through second grade teachers at Woodbine Elementary School through the SIA program. The content of the workshops were on read aloud methods and how to involve parents in the read aloud program. Other reading related workshops were conducted on storytelling. The storytelling workshops gave the teachers strategies for improving their read aloud methods.

The teachers supplemented the basal readers by having sets of library books in their classrooms. This activity was coordinated with the media specialist. The teachers also purchased trade storybooks from reading clubs for use in their classrooms. These books were purchased through SIA funds and through an innovation grant.

The test coordinator for the school presented an inservice

program on the analysis of standardized reading test results for the teachers in each grade. Teachers used these results in assigning students to reading groups for the school year.

The number of worksheets used in the classrooms of the teachers was reduced. The teachers were given the number of photocopies they made the previous year, and they were required to reduce the number of photocopies by 10%. In order to accomplish this goal, the teachers made greater use of chalkboards and overhead projectors.

The teachers in kindergarten through second grade actively recruited parents to read aloud to their children at home. The teachers held individual conferences with parents about the benefits their children would receive by parents reading aloud to them. The teachers also gave parents tips on how to read aloud to children and what to read to them.

The teachers encouraged the parents to enroll their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club, an innovation program designed to involve parents in the education of their children. Parents who enrolled their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club were encouraged to read aloud to their children for 10 to 15 minutes each day, as often as they could, preferably five times a week. The parents were also required to keep simple reading logs of their read aloud activities with their children which were turned in to the teachers at the beginning of each month. For the read aloud efforts

of their parents, children received a free storybook from the principal each month.

Teachers read daily to their students for 10 to 15 minutes. The teachers were required to keep reading logs of their classroom reading. Each month, teachers received storybooks of their choice from the principal for their classroom read aloud efforts.

Paraprofessionals worked with the teachers to improve the reading program at Woodbine Elementary School. In kindergarten through third grade at the school, each teacher had a paraprofessional. In the fourth and fifth grades at the school, each grade had a paraprofessional. The paraprofessionals worked with individuals or small groups of students to improve their reading skills.

Students at Woodbine Elementary School, as part of the reading improvement program, participated in several writing experiences. Some of these were either local or statewide writing contests. Other writing experiences included writing for the school newspaper or the county newspapers.

Students in second through fifth grades at the school participated in a recreational reading program sponsored by the media specialist. Students who participated in the program kept reading logs, and they would periodically receive incentives from the media specialist for their reading accomplishments.

Parents of children in kindergarten through second grade were given a calendar of activities. The calendars had activities the parents could do with their children throughout the year. The purpose of the calendars was to promote parental involvement with children.

The media specialist at Woodbine Elementary School was an active member in promoting reading and improving the reading program at the school. The media specialist encouraged children to use the library, and she helped them select books on their individual levels. Teachers were also encouraged to use the media facilities to help improve the reading program. High-interest books were displayed in a prominent area in the media center by the media specialist. This display was changed frequently by the media specialist or the media clerk.

A reading lab for students was established in the media center. Students used the reading lab in the morning before school officially started. Students were allowed to visit the media center and read silently during this time in a special section of the media center.

Volunteers from the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base came to the school throughout the school year and read aloud to small groups of children. Upon arriving at the school, the Navy volunteer was directed to the media center to read aloud to a small group of children. Upon a prearranged schedule among the teachers and the

media specialist, a small group of students could be sent from a classroom to the media center anytime during the school day.

In addition to the volunteer efforts of the U.S. Navy at the school, other community members were involved in the reading improvement program. Community members and parents were invited to come to the school and read aloud to children and to provide tutoring services. The media specialist, principal and the teachers coordinated these activities.

Chapter 5

Action Plan and Chronology

Original Action Plan

The original action plan for the project was to improve the reading performance of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School as measured by the SDRT Auditory Vocabulary, Word Reading, and Reading Comprehension subtests. Research had shown that one of the best ways to increase student reading performance was to get parents involved in the reading education of their children. Comer (1986) and Rich (1985) both promoted parental involvement in the reading improvement of their children. Becher (1985), Clary (1989), Dwyer and Isbell (1988), Griffin (1988), Haney (1988), and Radecki (1987) all advocated reading aloud to children. Many other authors also suggested that reading aloud to children would increase reading comprehension.

The school administrator's role in the efforts to improve reading was part of the original action plan. Finn and McKinney (1986) gave several examples of how the principal could help improve reading. The principal was responsible for heterogeneous grouping of students in all grades. A period of sustained silent reading was planned, and reading aloud to small groups of students by the principal was also part of the action plan. The establishment of a

read aloud program by the principal involving parents, teachers, and students was the main focus of the action plan.

Children's literature in the curriculum at the school was to be promoted by the media specialist. Sets of library books for teachers to use in their classrooms would be provided by the media specialist. The media specialist would also sponsor a recreational reading program. Lehman and Crook (1988) advocated children's literature in the curriculum, and Fry and Sakiey (1986) suggested that teachers should supplement basal readers and encourage students to do much extra reading.

Griffin (1988) promoted community leaders to participate in reading aloud to children. The action plan for the project focused on reading aloud to children. Volunteers from the community would visit the school and read aloud to groups of children. A read aloud program would be established with parents and their children, and teachers would read aloud to the students each school day.

Chronology of Implementation Activities

The action plan for strategy implementation for the reading improvement project at Woodbine Elementary School began in July 1991. The reading improvement project included many strategies that were designed and implemented for all grades at the school. However, the second grade was the one chosen as the focal point to concentrate reading improvement efforts and to measure changes in

reading ability through a testing program. The following is a narrative of the action plan for reading improvement at the school.

The faculty and staff handbook for the 1991-1992 school year was written during July 1991, and it contained components of the reading improvement program. The handbook was printed and distributed to each member of the faculty and staff when they returned for preplanning during August 1991. In addition to the faculty and staff handbook, student schedules were given to the professional staff during preplanning. The student schedules were based on teacher assignments. For the 1991-1992 school year, several teachers were assigned to teaching positions other than ones they had previously held.

During July 1991, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) was scored, and averages were determined. The entire battery of the SDRT including Auditory Vocabulary, Auditory Discrimination, Phonetic Analysis, Word Reading, and Read Comprehension was administered to first and second grade students the previous spring. The results of three of the subtests of the SDRT were used to compare the scores of second grade students who were tested in May 1992.

"Travel the World With Books," a recreational reading program sponsored by the school media specialist, was included in the school curriculum for the 1991-1992 school term. This recreational

reading program involved students in second through fifth grades. As a reward for their reading, students periodically received incentives from the media specialist. The teachers received materials about this program from the media specialist during preplanning.

During July 1991, notification was received at the school from the Georgia Department of Education concerning an innovation grant that had been awarded to the school. The innovation grant was for one year in the amount of \$21,641 for implementation of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. This innovative program was designed to promote academic and recreational reading by involving parents in reading aloud to their children at home, while teachers read aloud to students in the classrooms. This two-fold approach was intended to foster a love of reading in children at an early age and give them an academic boost to help them reach their maximum educational potential.

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club, as part of the reading improvement program, was explained and promoted during August 1991, at the Woodbine Elementary School PTA's first meeting for the school year. At this meeting, teachers talked to parents about the Woodbine Read Aloud Program. Handouts on reading aloud were given to the parents, and they viewed samples of the storybooks used in the program.

The new school term of 1991-1992 involved the implementation of a new basal reading series in the Camden County Schools. During preplanning in August, teachers in kindergarten through third grade from Woodbine Elementary School attended a county inservice program on the newly adopted basal reading series. The newly adopted basal reading series was from Macmillian.

An after school child care program, the After School Club, existed at the school. The after school child care program served the needs of working parents whose children required adult care immediately after normal school hours and before parents concluded their work. At the beginning of the school year, personnel from the After School Club were given access to the media center to utilize the books and other services. They were encouraged to read aloud daily to the children in their care.

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club was explained to the faculty and staff during preplanning in August. Teachers were given instructions for implementation of the program in their classrooms. They were assigned their roles in recruiting parents to read aloud to their children and to become involved in their children's education. The teachers in kindergarten through second grade began contacting parents of children in their classrooms and encouraging them to read aloud to their children. The teachers contacted the parents by phone, in person, or by letter. Parents were invited to visit the school for

conferences with their children's teachers, the media specialist, and the principal. Parents were given information on the benefits of reading aloud to their children and on techniques for reading aloud. This activity began at the opening of school and continued throughout the school year as additional students were enrolled at the school.

Parents who enrolled their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club agreed to read aloud for 10 to 15 minutes daily as often as they could. They were encouraged to read five times a week or more. The Woodbine Read Aloud Club form (Appendix D, page 138) was used to enroll students in the program. As part of the read aloud program, the parents were required to keep simple reading logs of their read aloud efforts with their children. The reading logs were turned in to the teacher at the beginning of each month (Appendix E, page 139). For the monthly read aloud efforts of their parents, the children each received a free storybook from the principal. At the beginning of each month, children would come to the principal's office and select a storybook of their choice. Bookplates were placed in the books with the children's names, dates, and the principal's signature. Children were given an additional reading log form to take home for their parents to use before for the next visit to the principal's office. This activity continued throughout the school year.

While the parents were encouraged to read aloud to their children at home, the kindergarten through second grade teachers read aloud daily to children in their classrooms. The teachers kept the same simple reading logs as the parents. Each month, the teachers turned their reading logs into the principal, and they received storybooks just as the children did. The teachers used the newly acquired storybooks in their classrooms. This activity continued throughout the school year, and it was an important aspect of the reading improvement program at the school. Not all the children received the benefits of being read aloud to at home; however, at school the teachers read aloud to all the children.

During initial conferences, teachers gave parents activity calendars. Each child's parent received a commercially produced calendar of activities that the parent and child could do together at home. The teachers explained various activities in the calendar with parents to help them understand how the activities related to the reading program and enhanced the general education of their children.

Beginning with the 1991-1992 school year, teachers throughout the school were required to conduct weekly grade level meetings for the purposes of planning and coordination of learning activities. These regularly scheduled meetings were conducted during teacher planning periods. The administrators frequently attended these

meetings especially to discuss the progress of the reading improvement program.

A storyteller visited the school in October 1991, and presented a workshop for the teachers. The reading improvement program was the focal point of the storyteller's presentation to the faculty. She explained how storytelling could enhance the read aloud program. She gave examples about improving oral readings and using expression in reading. The storyteller also visited the children in their classrooms and told them stories.

During October 1991, the first edition of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club Newsletter was printed. This newsletter contained information about the children in the read aloud program, and it gave reading tips to the parents. The newsletter was issued throughout the school year and sent home with every child in kindergarten through second grade (Appendix F, page 140).

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club was promoted throughout the reading improvement project. The local newspapers printed short articles about the program (Appendix G, page 142). Several times during the project, a television station did news coverages of the read aloud program. Information about the Woodbine Read Aloud Club was presented to members of the Board of Education and the public during regular Board of Education meetings. The local radio station also featured the Woodbine Read Aloud on broadcasts. The program

was also promoted by the principal's speaking to local community and civic organizations.

During the 1991-1992 school year, the principal of Woodbine Elementary School received a School Bell Award from the Georgia Association of Elementary School Principals (GAESP) at the GAESP Fall Conference at Lake Lanier. The award was presented for the "Travel the World With Books Program" initiated at the school as part of the reading improvement program to improve recreational reading. GAESP present the principal with a certificate and a coveted school bell (Appendix H, page 146).

During the implementation of the reading improvement project, students in kindergarten through fifth grade participated in county and statewide writing activities and competitions. Students were encouraged to write articles for the Camden County Schools Newsletter, local newspapers, and the school newspaper. Children's writings from Woodbine Elementary School were entered in several statewide writing competitions during the project.

In March 1992, the Commander Submarine Group 10 from the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base adopted Woodbine Elementary School. The official adoption by the Navy recognized the commitment of service personnel to work with the students and faculty members at the school. Navy personnel served in the school in many capacities. They read to children, listened to children read,

tutored students, and served as excellent role models for the students.

In May 1992, six professional faculty members attended the International Reading Association Conference in Orlando, Florida. This conference enabled the teachers to attend workshops and meetings listening and participating with outstanding leaders in the field of reading. The teachers viewed exhibits, visited with authors of children's books, and listened to noted speakers. Upon returning to the school, these teachers shared their experiences and newly gained knowledge with the other faculty members.

During the latter part of May 1991, a team of certified validators conducted an on-site review of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club Project. This on-site team visited the school for two days and interviewed the principal, media specialist, classroom teachers, parents, and students involved with the program. After the on-site visit, the team of certified validators submitted a report to the Georgia State Department of Education (Appendix I, page 147).

As children left school for summer vacation, a summer read aloud program was established. Parents were informed that they should continue reading aloud to their children during the summer months. As a reward for their efforts, children of the parents who read aloud to them during the summer months would receive a free storybook for each month of parental read aloud activity.

In July 1992, notification was sent to Woodbine Elementary School from the Georgia Department of Education about second year funding of the innovation program, the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. The school received funding in the amount of \$24,784 to continue the program for the final year with state assistance.

At the 1992-1993 school year began, plans were made by the administration and the faculty for improving the project. The major improvements included orientation of new faculty members to the reading improvement program, obtaining a greater amount of parental involvement in the read aloud program, and a revision of staff development plans for the faculty members. In addition, plans were made to expand the Woodbine Read Aloud Club to include third grade students.

For the 1992-1993 school year, additional teachers were employed at the school. There were five teachers in kindergarten, four teachers in first grade, four teachers in second grade, and four teachers in third grade. Fourth and fifth grades each had three regular classroom teachers. A full-time speech teacher was employed at the school, and two more special education teachers were employed to serve the needs of those children who qualified for special education services.

The teachers in kindergarten through third grade were involved in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. These teachers were given an

orientation about the read aloud program during preplanning for the 1992-1993 school year by the principal. Teachers who were involved in the reading improvement program during the previous year served as resource persons for the teachers who were new to the school. This included one kindergarten teacher, two first grade teachers, and four third grade teachers. All the second grade teachers were involved in the reading improvement program during the 1991-1992 school year. However, one of the second grade teachers served in first grade the previous year.

Teachers in kindergarten through third grade recruited parents to read aloud to their children at home. Parents were encouraged to come to the school and have conferences with the teachers. During these conferences, the teachers explained the benefits children would receive by having their parents read aloud to them. As in the previous school year, parents were encouraged to enroll their children for the Woodbine Read Aloud Club.

The recruiting of parents to read aloud to their children was easier during the 1992-1993 school year, because the majority of the children in first through third grades had been involved in the program during the preceding year. Many of the parents of the children enrolled in kindergarten for the first time were not familiar with the read aloud program. However, the kindergarten teachers encouraged many of the parents of their students to read

aloud at home and keep simple reading logs.

The reading logs were turned in to the principal at the beginning of each month by the children. Each child who turned in a reading log was allowed to visit the principal's office and select a storybook. A bookplate with the child's name was placed in the book chosen. The children kept the storybooks for their very own, and each child was given another reading log for the next month.

During the first four months of the 1992-1993 school year, participation in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club increased compared to the first four months of the 1991-1992 school year. Over 250 storybooks were given away to children each month. Approximately 70% of the children were receiving free storybooks from the principal each month.

Over 3000 storybooks were ordered to give away to children during the 1992-1993 school. The storybooks were of high quality from a leading publisher. Many of the titles were the same ones used by the teachers in the classrooms and available in the school media center. After discounts, the average cost of each book was less than \$2.00.

The media specialist selected over 360 books, suitable for reading aloud, to add to the media collection. These books and the storybooks for the children were purchased through an innovation grant through the Georgia Department of Education.

Staff development opportunities for the kindergarten through third grade teachers during the 1992-1993 school year were provided on several occasions. Five teachers participated in a whole language workshop in Savannah, Georgia, in October, and nine other teachers participated in another whole language workshop in January, in Brunswick, Georgia. Two of the teachers participating in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club attended the International Reading Association Regional Conference in New Orleans in December.

The teachers who participated in reading workshops or conferences shared their learning experiences with their colleagues upon returning to school. This was accomplished through school staff development workshops. The results of these school workshops on reading were positive. While only five teachers chose to participate in the October whole language workshop, nine additional teachers participated in the January whole language workshop after being inspired by the teachers who attended the first workshop.

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club and the reading improvement project continued throughout the 1992-1993 school year. Plans were made to provide additional inservice opportunities for the teachers and for the parents of the children in the program.

Chapter 6

Results

Overview of Problem and Setting

Second grade students who attended Woodbine Elementary School during 1988, 1989, and 1990, did not achieve average percentile ranks on the reading portion of the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills that were above the Georgia statewide average percentile ranks in reading nor above the average percentile ranks for reading for other elementary schools in Camden County.

Woodbine Elementary School was the setting of the project. The school is located in City of Woodbine, which is in the southeast coastal area of Georgia. The school had a population of 440 students in grades K-5 and 65 faculty and staff members. Second grade students at the school were the subjects of the study.

Results of Implementation

This research project was designed to improve the reading achievement of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School. Evaluation data presented on the following pages indicated that the reading achievement of second grade students improved during the intervention of the project. In addition, the research project contributed to an increase in involvement of parents in the education of their children. Finally, the research project

contributed to the development and implementation of an innovative read aloud program that was funded by the Georgia Department of Education.

The evaluation process included a comparison of auditory vocabulary, reading comprehension, and word reading scores after project intervention with scores in the same areas for second grade students tested in May 1991. In addition, an analysis was made of parental participation in the read aloud program from kindergarten through second grade.

The following was the first of three objectives that were used in the research project:

1. As a result of intervention from July 1, 1991, the beginning of the project, through January 31, 1993, the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving a read aloud program will increase their auditory vocabulary percentile from 32.7 to 40.9, as measured by the SDRT auditory vocabulary subtest.

Analysis of the pre and post test scores of the SDRT auditory vocabulary subtest indicated that the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School made substantial gains in auditory vocabulary. The non-reading auditory vocabulary subtest of the SDRT assessed not only the extent of children's listening vocabulary, but it did so through the use of sentence contexts so that the

subtest was as much a measure of comprehension as vocabulary. The auditory vocabulary subtest was selected because of the modality tested; reading was not required. Moreover, this language dimension, more perhaps than others, would directly benefit from read alouds. This was confirmed for project second graders who outperformed second grades from the previous year whose test results served as the controls. The following table (Table 23) gives the test results from the auditory vocabulary subtest of the SDRT that was given in May 1991, to the second graders and the test results of second grade target population students in May 1992, who received the read aloud program:

Table 23

SDRT Auditory Vocabulary for 2nd Grade Students

Date	N	M%ile Rank
May 1991	65	32.7
May 1992	74	45.3

The results represented a 38.5% increase in auditory vocabulary for the second grade students who received the program. This was 13.5% higher increase than originally projected. These results were supportive of the project's effectiveness.

The second objective of the project was as follows:

2. As a result of intervention from July 1, 1991, the beginning of

the project, through January 31, 1993, the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving a read aloud program will increase their reading comprehension percentile from 27.4 to 34.3, as measured by the SDRT reading comprehension subtest.

Analysis of the test scores from the SDRT reading comprehension subtest given to second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School in May 1991, and to the target population, indicated that the second grade students in May 1992, receiving the read aloud program made substantial gains in reading comprehension. The reading comprehension subtest presented students with tasks that were mediated by decoding ability. That is, poor decoders might be expected to perform poorly even if the the read aloud program sharpened their comprehension ability. Nevertheless, gains could still be reasonably expected across the entire population, and this subtest was accordingly administered. The results of the reading comprehension subtest of the SDRT are given in Table 24.

Table 24

SDRT Reading Comprehension for 2nd Grade Students

Date	N	M%ile Rank
May 1991	65	27.4
May 1992	74	40.1

These results represented a 46.4% increase in reading comprehension for the second grade students who received the program. This was 21.4% higher increase than originally projected. These results were supportive of the project's effectiveness.

The third objective for the project was as follows:

3. As a result of intervention from July 1, 1991, the beginning of the project, through January 31, 1993, the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School receiving a read aloud program will increase their word reading percentile from 29.6 to 37.0, as measured by the SDRT word reading subtest.

Analysis of the word reading subtest of the SDRT indicated that the second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School who received the read aloud program made substantial gains in word reading. This subtest measured pupils' ability to recognize words and attach meaning to them. Thus, it provided an assessment of applied reading for pupils who may or may not read sentences or paragraphs. Pupils were asked to identify words that described a particular illustration. This language dimension was selected because students who were read aloud to had opportunities to identify words in relationship to illustrations in the story books they received through the program. The following table (Table 25) gives the test results of the word reading subtest of the SDRT for

the same 1991 and 1992 students:

Table 25

SDRT Word Reading for 2nd Grade Students

Date	N	M%ile Rank
May 1991	65	29.6
May 1992	74	42.5

These results represented a 43.6% increase in word reading for the second grade students who received the program. This was 17.5% higher increase than originally projected. These results were supportive of the project's effectiveness.

This project was designed to involve parents in the education of their children by having parents read aloud to their children at home, while teachers read aloud to students at school. Engaging parents in reading aloud to their children at home was not a simple task. The kindergarten through second grade teachers contacted the parents of their students, by letter, in person, or by phone. Parents were encouraged to come to the school for conferences during which the teachers explained the read aloud program. The parents were also invited to check out books from the school library to read at home to their children. The parents were given tips from the teachers on techniques for reading aloud at home.

During the 1991-1992 school term at Woodbine Elementary School,

the kindergarten through second grade teachers recruited parents to enroll their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. These parents were encouraged to read aloud daily for 10 to 15 minutes at least five times a week and keep a simple reading log of their read aloud activities. The reading logs were turned in to the homeroom teacher at the beginning of each month. As a reward for their parent's read aloud efforts at home, the children who turned in a reading log each month came to the office and received a free storybook of their choice from the principal.

Although almost all of the kindergarten through second grade parents enrolled their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club, the percentage of parents who read aloud to their children and turned in reading logs each month varied considerably. The following table (Table 26) gives the percentage of kindergarten through second grade children who were read aloud to at home during the 1991-1992 school year, according to reading logs turned in each month to the principal:

Table 26

1991-1992 Home Read Aloud Percentages

Grade	% of Children Read Aloud
Kindergarten	60.6
First Grade	55.8
Second Grade	56.1

At the beginning of the project, the percentage of read aloud efforts by parents was uncertain. However, the teachers involved in the program estimated that 25% of the parents would participate in the program. The percentage of parent participation at each grade exceeded 50%. On a monthly basis, the percentage of parents reading aloud to their children ranged from 26 to 88 in kindergarten, 19 to 88 in first grade and 42 to 79 in second grade. The lowest monthly percentage of parents reading aloud to their children occurred in December, and the highest occurred in the month following efforts by the teachers to send weekly reminders about reading aloud to the parents.

The number of times children were read aloud to at home was fairly consistent. Parents were encouraged to read aloud to their children 10 to 15 minutes daily at least five times a week. Accordingly, each child who participated in the program would be read aloud to at home 20 times a month. The average fell below this figure. Kindergarten students were read aloud to at home 16.3 times per month, while first and second grade students averaged 15.1 times a month.

From September through December of the 1992-1993 school year, the percentage of children being read aloud to at home was again measured by examining reading logs which were turned in at the beginning of each month. Table 27 gives the percentages of children

in kindergarten through third grade who were read aloud to at home by parents during September through December of the 1992-1993 school year:

Table 27

1992-1993 Home Read Aloud Percentages

Grade	% of Children Read Aloud
Kindergarten	75.2
First Grade	68.1
Second Grade	67.3
Third Grade	62.4

The percentage of children read aloud to at home during the first four months of the 1992-1993 school year increased for each grade compared to the 1991-1992 home read aloud percentages. The average increase in read aloud participation at home was approximately 20%. This increase in parents reading aloud at home was probably due to the parent, students, and teachers being familiar with the program. The improved reading comprehension, auditory vocabulary, and word reading scores of the second grade students obtained during the 1991-1992 school year, as measured by the SDRT, were used by the teachers in promoting and recruiting parents to read aloud to their children during the 1992-1993 school

year.

Summary of Accomplishments

The major accomplishment of the project was to improve the reading performance of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary. Through the interventions of the project, this was accomplished as measured by the result of the scores of the second grade students on the SDRT. However, other students in kindergarten and first grade received the same reading interventions, although test measurements were not determined for their grades. As the project extended into the 1992-1993 school year, third grade students also received the same interventions as did the kindergarten through second grade students.

This project centered upon reading aloud to children. Teachers read aloud to children at school, while parents read aloud to them at home. The search of the literature contained many articles on the benefits of reading aloud to children, but no studies were found that involved as many children as this project did, and that produced the same positive results.

Parental involvement in the reading improvement program at the school was a key factor in the success of the project. Over 50% of the parents in kindergarten through second grade read aloud to their children at home on a regular basis during the 1991-1992 school year. This percentage increased during the first four months of the

1992-1993 school year. Children were read aloud to at home over 15 times per month throughout the project. In addition, teachers in the classroom read aloud daily to all their students.

Teachers in kindergarten through second grade recruited parents to enroll their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. These parents responded to the challenge of the teachers, and they became involved in their children's education by reading aloud to them at home. Numerous authors, such as: Clary (1989); Becher (1985); Rasinski and Fredericks (1991); Haney (1988); Radecki (1987); Rustin (1989); Daly (1987); and Miller (1986) reported the positive effects of parents and other adults reading aloud to children. The results of the intervention of parents reading to children of Woodbine Elementary School indicated that this activity helped to increase the children's reading comprehension, word reading and auditory vocabulary.

The recommendations of Trelease (1991) were encouraging, and they proved to be factual. As parents heard about the read aloud program at the school from other parents who were involved in the program, the number of parents involved in the program increased. The children of the parents not involved in the read aloud program also contributed to an increase in parental involvement. Children who were not being read aloud to at home told about their classmates turning in reading logs and receiving free storybooks. In

addition, the teachers continued to contact parents and tell them about the Woodbine Read Aloud Club.

The most prevalent probable causes of the low reading achievement of children at Woodbine Elementary School involved the low socioeconomic status of many of the families from which the children came. The parents of these children were not as involved in their children's education as often as parents from higher socioeconomic status. This former group of parents provided fewer books in the home for their children. Through the interventions of this project, many of the parents of low socioeconomic status became involved in the education of their children by reading aloud to them at home. The children received free storybooks of their choosing for their parents' read aloud efforts. This project provided storybooks to be put in the hands of children who may not have ordinarily received them.

The project also addressed the probable cause of low reading achievement as being an overuse of worksheets by teachers, thereby reducing reading time of students. The number of worksheets were reduced, and children were provided additional opportunities to read, such as, the sustained silent reading time. Another probable cause was addressed. The ability grouping of students for reading was reduced to some extent. Reading groups in the regular classrooms were heterogeneous; however, Chapter 1 reading classes continued

to be homogeneous, according to county school policy. This hindering influence will not be overcome until the Chapter 1 program is restructured.

Another hindering influence to the project was the county reading policy requirement involving children at certain grade levels to master levels set by the basal reading series. The influence was reduced somewhat by adopting a new basal reading series and allowing the teachers to set minimum requirements for student mastery.

As the instructional leader for the school, the principal was supportive of the reading improvement program. The assignment of teaching responsibilities was one of the first tasks of the principal at the beginning of the program. There was a reduction in the number of teachers allotted to the school for the 1991-1992 year, compared to the previous school term. Kindergarten and first grade each lost a teacher. However, second grade retained three teachers as during 1990-1991. A teacher was assigned the SIA position for kindergarten and first grade. This teacher served in an augmented position by working with small groups of students for short periods throughout the school day. Classrooms in kindergarten through second grade approached the maximum number of students allowed under state regulations. Under the circumstances of crowded classrooms and with the students' educational interest in

mind, the principal made the best possible teaching assignments.

Sustained silent reading occurred throughout the school. A study by Hallinger and Murphy (1985) supported giving students time for sustained silent reading. Students and teachers at Woodbine Elementary School read for pleasure each day for approximately 15 minutes. Many of the teachers held their sustained silent reading before beginning other activities for the day. This did not allow all the students to participate in sustained silent reading, because some teachers did this activity before school officially began for the day.

Staff development activities were conducted for the benefit of the teachers involved in the reading improvement program on several occasions during the school year. The activity that was reported to be of greatest benefit to some of the teachers in the reading improvement program was their participation in the International Reading Association Conference in Orlando, Florida, during May 1992. This activity had its limitations in that only six teachers from the school attended the conference. However, the teachers who did attend the conference shared their experiences with the other teachers at the school. In addition, audio tapes of some of the speeches of noted authors were purchased and placed in the school library for the professional staff. Plans were made at the end of the 1991-1992 school year to allow other teachers to attend future

reading conferences and workshops.

Weekly grade level meetings occurred throughout the project. Classroom teachers met with their grade level colleagues each week for planning purposes. The grade level chairperson turned in written reports weekly to the principal concerning the meetings. The principal occasionally attended grade level meetings; however, he read all the reports from the meetings. These reports provided an avenue of communication between the faculty and the administration that was unexpected. The grade level reports would frequently contain comments and questions about teachers' concerns. This allowed the teachers partial anonymity in asking the administration questions or making suggestions.

The grade level meetings and reports reflected issues involving the reading improvement program at the school. The kindergarten through second grade teachers discussed the Woodbine Read Aloud Club, improving reading test scores, appropriate techniques for teaching reading, and other strategies for improving reading.

The media specialist was a catalyst in improving the reading program at the school. She sponsored the "Travel the World With Books Program," a recreational reading program for second through fifth grade students. Students who participated in this program periodically received incentives from the media specialist for their reading efforts. McGrath (1987) supported giving incentives to

students for their reading accomplishments. During the 1992-1993 school year at Woodbine Elementary, this program was adjusted to include only the fourth and fifth grades at the school, because the Woodbine Read Aloud Club was expanded to include students from kindergarten through third grade.

The media specialist established a morning reading lab in the library during the first year of the project, but this was in competition with the sustained silent reading that occurred at the beginning of the school day in many classrooms. The reading lab continued during the 1992-1993 school year, but students were free to choose their reading site. Having the media center opened before school officially started allowed students additional time to select books and use the library facilities. Distad (1987) supported a reading lab before the school day officially began.

Parents and other adults were encouraged to visit the school and read aloud to small groups of students. Finn and McKinney (1986) recommended that community persons be invited to read to children at school, and Martinez, Vernon, Allen and Teale (1991) also supported this activity. Adults from the Woodbine community were encouraged to visit the school and read aloud to students. Navy personnel from the Kings Bay Naval Submarine Base visited the school and read to students frequently. At the beginning of the 1992-1993 school year, the admiral from the Naval Base initiated

the volunteer read aloud program by being the first volunteer from the Navy Base.

Some teachers at Woodbine Elementary School identified children in their classrooms who were not being read aloud to at home, and, therefore, not receiving free story books each month. To compensate for the inactivity of parents who did not read to their children, adult volunteers were recruited to read to small groups of these children. The principal participated in the read aloud activities by reading to students in classrooms and in the media center.

The number of worksheets given to students by their teachers was reduced according to records of photocopying from the resource clerk. Observations in the classrooms by the administrators revealed that, in general, teachers were employing other teaching strategies in their lessons and using fewer worksheets than in previous years.

Discussion

The increase of the auditory vocabulary of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School as measured by the SDRT was a direct result of the interventions of the project. The auditory vocabulary percentile rank of the second grade students tested in 1991 was 32.7, and the auditory vocabulary percentile rank of the second grade students receiving the interventions of the project increased to 45.3. The increase in reading comprehension of these

second grade students went from 27.4 to 40.1, and their word reading went from 29.6 to 42.5, both measured by the SDRT. The increase in all three of these measurements could be attributed to the interventions employed during the project, especially the read aloud component.

Although many interventions were employed throughout the project, the main focus was the read aloud intervention which took place at school and at home. The read aloud intervention produced some side effects not anticipated. One of these was the relationship between the principal and the students. Before and during the early period of the project, many of the children, as reported by parents and teachers, associated the principal's office with discipline only. As the project evolved, the attitudes of the children appeared to change. Children became accustomed to visiting the principal's office and receiving free storybooks. Their association with the principal's office and discipline was changed to a more pleasant association.

Another positive side effect of the project was the attitude of the parents who were involved in the program. Many of the parents expressed their appreciation to the principal, the media specialist, and the teachers for involving them in the program. They enjoyed reading to their children, and they enjoyed having their children read to them.

One projection that was uncertain was the percentage of parents participating in the project. Although the percentage of parents reading aloud to their children was much greater than originally projected by the teachers, it was anticipated by the administration and the teachers that many of the children at the lower end of the socioeconomic scale would not be read aloud to at home. This turned out to be factual, in some cases. To compensate for the lack of parental involvement, children who were from lower socioeconomic conditions and not being read aloud to home were identified. Teachers of these children provided special read aloud opportunities for these children at school by using adult volunteers to read to them in small groups.

Another side effect that was not anticipated was the interest the project created within the school system. Other elementary administrators and teachers asked the professional personnel at Woodbine Elementary School about the project. Several of the elementary administrators wanted to know the results of the project in terms of improved reading accomplishments.

The number of different storybooks that children were exposed to through the project was not anticipated. Throughout the project, children visited the principal's office and selected free storybooks from over 400 different titles. In addition to the students, the teachers at the school were also exposed to many books and authors

new to them. The teachers were allowed to select free storybooks each month for their read aloud efforts in the classrooms.

Chapter 7

Discussion

Recommendations

The solution to the problem of low reading achievement among elementary students will continue to be a challenging one for teachers and school administrators. There is no single solution to the problem of low reading achievement. Just as there are many ways to teach reading, there are many approaches to improving reading achievement for elementary students. This project focused on establishing a read aloud program involving the students, their parents, teachers in the classrooms, and volunteers from the community. Other strategies were employed at the school level that were within the jurisdiction of the administrator and other faculty members.

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club was funded by an innovation grant from the Georgia Department of Education. This grant provided funds for staff development and for the purchase of storybooks to give to children. In addition, the grant provided funds for purchasing the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Tests that were administered to students in first and second grades. Although funds were available for this project through the Georgia Department of Education, plans were formulated to implement this project using school funds, if

necessary.

This research project will be continued through the 1992-1993 school year at Woodbine Elementary School. The Woodbine Read Aloud Club will be continued after the implementation of the initial project. However, the project will be modified to involve just kindergarten through second grade children in the project.

One of the results obtained during the 1992-1993 school year concerned the reading habits and preferences of third grade students. Third grade students at Woodbine Elementary School indicated that they preferred reading on their own rather than having an adult read to them. This was verified by third grade teachers who stated that third grade students were becoming more confident in their reading.

Implications

All school districts are continually striving to improve the reading ability of children. This project has produced positive results for improving the reading comprehension of second grade students at Woodbine Elementary School. The solution strategies used in this project could be adopted in most elementary schools with few modifications to the established reading curriculum.

One of the key factors of the project was the ease of implementation. The main focus was the Woodbine Read Aloud Club, which involved recruiting parents to read aloud at home to their

children while teachers read aloud to students at school. Many elementary teachers already read aloud to their students on a daily basis. The addition of having parents read to their children is a matter of recruitment. This is primarily a function of the relationships between classroom teachers and parents of the children they teach.

The storybooks given to the children during the project created a financial consideration. Although the storybooks given to children during the project were purchased through a grant, other sources of funding would have been employed if the grant funds were not available. Funding for the storybooks could have come from the general school account. Virtually every school system has funds allocated for staff development.

The positive outcomes of implementing a read aloud program at home and at school, as evidenced by this project, should encourage other schools to adopt these strategies in their attempts to improve the reading of young children.

Dissemination

Near the end of the 1992-1993 school year, state trained validators from the Georgia Department of Education will conduct an on-site review of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club for state validation. After the Woodbine Read Aloud Club has received state validation, it will be eligible for adoption by other school systems in Georgia.

School systems may apply for an Adoption Grant by completing an Adoption Grant Application. Innovation Program grant funds will support part of the costs involved in implementing new programs. A local financial effort is also required to receive adoption funds.

This project was funded as a developmental innovation project which was to be field tested for two years and then validated by a trained review team. Once it is validated by the state, the Woodbine Read Aloud Club will be advertised throughout the state by the Georgia Department of Education through the Innovation Program. School systems who adopt the Woodbine Read Aloud Club as part of their reading improvement program will receive inservice training and adoption funds from the state. The amount will be approximately \$5000. Local school systems will provide about 10% of the funds for the project. The funds received from the state are seed funds, that is, funds to get the project started in their system, and then they are expected to continue the program with local funding.

It should be noted that some of the validated projects available for adoption through the Innovation Program have been in existence for many years. The probability of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club being adopted by Georgia school systems for many years is very good. This project, through the efforts of the children, their parents, and teachers at Woodbine Elementary School has the

possibility of impacting the reading achievement of many children throughout the state in the coming years.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Classroom Teachers by Grade and Year

Teacher	Grade	90-91	89-90	88-89	87-88	86-87	85-86	84-85
101	K			x				
102	K		x	x	x			
103	K	x						
104	K	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
105	K						x	
106	K		x	x	x	x		
107	K	x	x					
108	K	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
156	K							x
109	1st	x						
110	1st			x	x	x	x	x
111	1st	x	x	x				
112	1st				x*	x		
113	1st					x		
114	1st				x	x		
115	1st						x	x
116	1st				x	x		
117	1st	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
118	1st		x					
119	1st	x	x	x	x*			
101	2nd				x	x		x
120	2nd			x				
121	2nd						x	x
122	2nd		x	x	x	x		
123	2nd	x	x					
106	2nd	x						
124	2nd						x	x
125	2nd				x			
115	2nd			x	x	x		
118	2nd	x		x	x	x	x	x
126	2nd		x	x				
101	3rd						x	
127	3rd					x*	x	x
128	3rd	x	x	x	x	x		

Teacher	Grade	90-91	89-90	88-89	87-88	86-87	85-86	84-85
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123	3rd			x	x	x		
129	3rd	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
130	3rd	x	x	x	x			
131	3rd					x*		
132	4th		x					
133	4th	x						
134	4th	x						
135	4th				x*			
136	4th				x	x	x	x
137	4th	x	x	x	x	x		
138	4th			x	x			
139	4th			x				
140	4th			x	x			
141	4th							x*
142	4th						x*	
131	4th					x*	x	
143	4th		x					
144	5th			x				
145	5th				x*			
146	5th						x*	
147	5th						x*	x*
137	5th						x*	
148	5th	x	x	x	x			
149	5th					x	x	x
150	5th				x*			
151	5th	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
140	5th					x		
152	5th			x				
153	5th	x						
154	5th		x	x				
103	Chap		x					
110	Chap		x*					
155	Chap			x				
121	Chap						x	
122	Chap	x						
140	Chap		x*					
126	Chap	x						

*partial year

Appendix B

Second Grade QCC Objectives in Language Arts

Topic/Concept A. Oral Communications - Listening

1. Expands listening vocabulary.
2. Follows three-step oral directions.
3. Listening to a variety of language patterns and literary sources.
4. Responds to questions on orally presented literature.
5. Recognizes various literary forms: fiction, nonfiction and poetry.
6. Determines meaning of unknown words in context.
7. Recalls and interprets orally presented information.

Topic/Concept B. Oral Communication-Speaking

1. Expands speaking vocabulary in daily experiences.
2. Communicates effectively.
3. Adapts language to various situations.
4. Retells stories and relates experiences.

Topic/Concept C. Written Communications - Reading

1. Reads to obtain meaning from print.
2. Reads a variety of materials for information and pleasure.
3. Expands reading vocabulary through formal and informal interactions.
4. Rereads for understanding.

5. Recognizes explicit main ideas, details, sequences of events, and cause-effect relationships.
6. Recognizes implicit main ideas, details, sequence of events, and cause-effect relationships.
7. Identifies the main characters.
8. Makes predictions.
9. Follows written instructions.
10. Interprets syntactic and semantic relationships.
11. Classifies and categorizes words.
12. Recognizes auditory similarities and differences in words, including single vowel sounds and rhyming patterns.
13. Uses word families, consonant and single vowel sound-letter relationships in word recognition.
14. Identifies grade vocabulary level vocabulary words by sight.
15. Distinguishes between fantasy and reality in stories.

Topic/Concept D. Written Communication - Writing

1. Participates in prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, proofreading, and publishing.
2. Begins editing for capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.
3. Expands writing vocabulary.
4. Dictates and writes experiences and stories using descriptive language.
5. Uses pictures, words and inventive spelling in personal

writing.

6. Express ideas in sentence form.
7. Organizes ideas for effective communication.
8. Prints legible.

Topic/Concept E. Literature

1. Experiences traditional and contemporary literature through a variety of media.
2. Demonstrates an interest in various types of literature.
3. Responds to literal, inferential and critical questions about literature.
4. Recognizes various literary forms: fiction, poetry, and nonfiction.
5. Distinguishes between fantasy and realism.
6. Identifies the traits, feelings, and actions of main characters.
7. Responds creatively to literature.
8. Recognizes that literature reflects human experiences.

Topic/Concept F. Reference and Study Skills

1. Uses book parts, including title page, table of contents, and glossary, as information sources.
2. Alphabetizes words to the second letter.
3. Uses guide words to locate words in dictionaries and topics in encyclopedias.

4. Recognizes the organization of fiction and nonfiction books in the media center.
5. Uses various sources (e.g., magazines, audio visuals, software) for information and pleasure.
6. Uses the media center as a source of information and pleasure.

Appendix C

Changes in Teacher Assignments

1989-1990	1990-1991
Grade/Section	Assignment
KA	Transferred to another school; not replaced.
KC	Moved to 2nd grade; replaced by Chapter 1 teacher.
1C	Moved to 2nd grade; replaced by Chapter 1 teacher.
2A	Moved to Chapter 1; replaced by kindergarten teacher.
2C	Moved to Chapter 1; replaced by 1st grade teacher.
4A	Transferred to another school; replaced by a new teacher.
5C	Transferred to another school; replaced by a new teacher.
Chapter 1A	Moved to kindergarten; replaced by a 2nd grade teacher.
Chapter 1B	Moved to 1st grade; replaced by a 2nd grade teacher.

The following grades/sections did not experience a change in personnel: KB, KD, 1A, 1B, 1D, 2B, 3A, 3B, 3C, 5A, and 5B.

Woodbine Read Aloud Club

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club is an innovative program at Woodbine Elementary School that is designed to promote academic and recreational reading through involving parents in reading aloud to their children. Educational research has shown that reading aloud to children is one of the best methods of increasing a child's vocabulary and reading comprehension. It is the aim of the school to involve parents, teachers and students in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. Parents will be encouraged to read aloud to their children at home while teachers read aloud to the children at school. With this two-fold approach we hope to foster a love of reading in children at an early age and give them an academic boost to help them reach their maximum educational potential.

Parents who enroll their children in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club are encouraged to read aloud to their children daily for 10 to 15 minutes at least five times a week throughout the school year. The parent will also turn in a simple reading log of their read aloud activities to the homeroom teacher at the beginning of each month. After the reading log is turned in each month, the child will receive incentives from the school; such as, books, bookmarkers, posters, pencils and/or other incentives.

I would like to enroll _____ in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. I will agree to read aloud to my child daily for 10 to 15 minutes as often as possible and keep a log of my read aloud activities that I will turn in to the homeroom teacher at the beginning of each month. My child will receive incentives from the school each month during the school year as long as I continue to read aloud to my child.

Parent

Teacher

Date

Grade

Phone Number

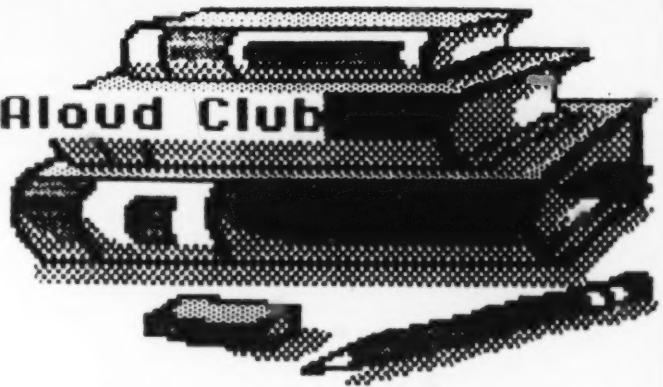
Return: _____

Student	Grade	Teacher
Parent's Signature	Month	

Read aloud as often as you can. Record what you read and date it. Use the back if necessary to record additional books. Sign the log and return it to your child's teacher at the beginning of each month. Thanks for reading aloud to a child.

[illegible][illegible]

The Woodbine Read Aloud Club Newsletter October, 1991



The Woodbine Read Aloud Club is an innovation program at Woodbine Elementary School that is designed to promote academic and recreational reading through involving parents in reading aloud to their children. Educational research has shown that reading aloud to children is one of the best methods of increasing a child's vocabulary and reading comprehension. It is the aim of the school to involve parents, teachers and students in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. Parents will be encouraged to read aloud to their children at home while teachers read aloud to the children at school. With this two-fold approach we hope to foster a love of reading in children at an early age and give them an academic boost to help them reach their maximum educational potential.

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READING ALOUD TIPS

1. Begin reading to children at an early age.
2. Try to set aside time every day for reading aloud.
3. Vary the length and subject matter of your reading.
4. The art of listening is an acquired one that must be taught and cultivated gradually.

MEMBERSHIP SOARS

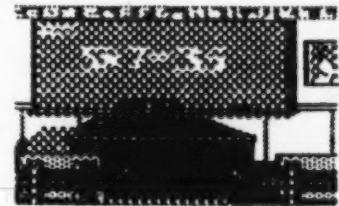
Over 70% of the students in kindergarten through second grade have



become members of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. If your child isn't a member, now is a good time to enroll your son or daughter and start reading aloud. Contact your child's homeroom teacher for more information.

STUDENTS RECEIVE FREE BOOKS

During September over 175 free books were given to students in kindergarten through the second grade who are



members of the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. More books will be given away in October as parents who have been reading aloud daily to their children, turn in reading logs to the homeroom teacher.

A new book is given to each child when he/she is enrolled in the Woodbine Read Aloud Club. Each child is allowed to select his/her book from a large variety of books especially purchased to be given away. A nameplate is placed in each book the child receives. Additional books are given to the child each month as parents continue to read aloud and turn in reading logs.

**Teach Your Child to
Respect Books by Taking
Care of Them!**

THE WOODBINE READ ALOUD CLUB NEWSLETTER



NOVEMBER 1991

Sharing Books!

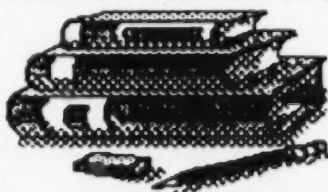
Sharing books helps create a special bond between parents and children. It introduces children to art through the illustrations. Sharing books enhances children's listening skills and develops important language skills. It introduces children to a wide variety of experiences, and it improves and enriches the quality of children's lives. Sharing books provides fun and enjoyment for children and adults.

How to Share Books

Find a comfortable place to sit. Recite or sing rhymes from your favorite books. Turn off other distractions (TV, radio or stereo). Hold the book so your child can see the pages clearly. Involve your child by having him or her point out objects, talk about the pictures or repeat common words. Read with expression. Vary the pace of your reading (slow or fast). Have your child select books to read. Reread your child's favorite books whenever asked.

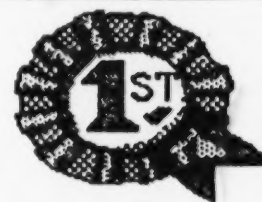
Other Read Aloud Tips

Be enthusiastic about books. Be an example for your child, and let her or him see you read books. Keep a wide selection of reading materials at home. Be aware of your child's reading interest. Give books as presents. Begin to build a child's home library. Use your local library regularly, and register your child for a library card.



FIRST PLACE

A first place award goes to all the parents who have been reading aloud to their children. Over 150 children in kindergarten through second grade were read aloud to at home during October. Each child who turned in a reading log received a free book of his or her choice from Mr. Christmas.



The children love receiving free books that they are able to keep for their very own. The quality of the books that are being given to the children is very high. Many of the books are award winning books. The average cost of each book is approximately five dollars. We are investing a considerable amount of money into the Woodbine Read Aloud Club because we think it is extremely important for your child to be read aloud to at home by you.

Just as you are reading aloud to your child at home, the teachers and paraprofessionals are reading aloud to your child at school each day. Keep up the good work and keep reading aloud to your child as often as you can.

How Important is Reading Aloud?

The Report of the Commission on Reading reported, "The single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children."



"The only cost of reading aloud is your time." (Jack Christmas)



WOODBINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL Principal Jack Christmas helps kindergarteners Brit-tany Sullivan left, Nicholas Perry and Blair Root select books to read aloud at home with their parents.

Photo by Karen S. Sykora

Woodbine Begins Read-Aloud Club

By KAREN S. SYKORA
Associate Editor

It has been proven time and again -- children who are read to at an early age learn faster and are much more likely to do better in school.

With those thoughts in mind, Woodbine Elementary School has initiated the Woodbine Read Aloud Club for all students in kindergarten through second grade.

The brainchild of principal Jack Christmas, the project involves the students, their parents, and teachers working together to instill good reading habits.

Currently 80 percent of the students in grades K-2 are enrolled in the program which rewards the participants with books, book-marks, posters, pencils and other incentives.

According to Christmas, the program approach is two-fold. The parents are encouraged to read aloud to their children each day for approximately 10-15 minutes while teachers read aloud to the students at school.

In September, more than 175 free books were given to students to take home and read with their

parents. When it's time for a child to pick out a book, he or she meets with Mr. Christmas to talk about what types of books the student would like to read.

"I usually spread about 40 or so books out on the floor and the children come into the office and look through all of them until they find one they like," Christmas explained. "Once they've selected the book, a nameplate with the child's name on it is glued into the book."

Parents who enrolled their children in the program agreed, through a signed contract, to read at least five times a week to their child throughout the year.

The student and parents keep a reading log of their read-aloud activities and turn it in at the beginning of each month.

All of the books and incentives have been purchased through a two-year grant Christmas obtained from the state this past January.

"This program is designed to help raise the educational level of students at Woodbine Elementary," Christmas explained. "We

hope that parents will not only get involved in reading with their children but also with other aspects of their children's education."

Christmas applied for the state grant by initially presenting a written proposal. Approximately 15 schools were selected to come to Atlanta last December to present their case to the Department of Education.

"I wanted to show this early intervention program could foster a love of books and learning that would stay with a child his entire life," Christmas explained. "Ultimately we hope this program increases the number of students who complete school."

The State Department of Education evidently agreed with Christmas because in January he was notified the school would receive a grant for approximately \$40,000 to fund the project for two years.

At the end of that time, state education representatives will evaluate the program to determine if it is an idea that should be recommended to other schools throughout the state.



WOODBINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL students participating in the Read Aloud Club pick out books from Principal Jack Christmas' office last week at the school. The program, which was recently funded through a grant extension for a second year, offers students a free book if their parents read aloud to them.

Photo by Mark Jicha

Reading program promotes desire to learn

By Jennifer K. Fullmer

Tribune Staff Reporter

The U.S. Department of Education defines the most important activity for children to enhance success in reading is reading aloud to them. Woodbine Elementary principal Jack Christmas agrees.

Approximately two years ago, Christmas applied to the State of Georgia's Innovation Program. The program is based on allowing the school systems throughout the state to apply for innovation program grants for initiating an educational program within the school.

Applicants must write a concept paper explaining their ideas for a program, yet tie it into educational priorities the state has set as guidelines the program must center around.

Christmas wanted to get more books to his students and increase their reading comprehension skills. He felt his program would fall into the boundaries of the high school drop-out rate, one of the priorities within the state's guidelines.

He adopted the idea that if children get involved with school and start to love school at an early age, the future of the drop-out rate would decrease.

"This is an early intervention program," Christmas said. "To get them to love books and be hooked on books for life. To like school and get them to love school."

Christmas' idea was partially accepted, and he was invited to Atlanta to defend and to explain his concept in further detail. His program was accepted, and the school received a \$20,000 grant to develop and to install the Read Aloud Club at Woodbine Elementary.

The Read Aloud Club involves teachers, students, their parents, and Christmas. Teachers in kindergarten through the third grade levels read to the students daily; occasionally Christmas visits the classes and handles the reading himself. When the children return home, Christmas has encouraged that someone in the household read to them as well.

"We try to get as many parents to read to the kids each day," Christmas said. "The teachers like it and the kids love it."

Every week children are called into Christmas' office to choose a new book at no cost. Christmas then attaches a bright sticker inside the cover, writes their name and signs his own.

He prefers to write in each by hand as opposed to a stamp of the school and principal. He feels it is more appropriate for him to take part and personalize the program as much as possible. It is something special the kids enjoy and can keep to look back on, he said.

When the students select a book, they are also given a reading log for keeping track of their at-home reading. This allows Christmas to see his idea at work and to know the children are benefitting from his efforts.

Christmas keeps journals, logs, and reports of the reading activity and amounts of time spent on it, both for personal reference and for the Innovation Program panel. Students are tested before and after the program, at the beginning and end of school, on reading comprehension and listening skills. The first year, the program showed marked improvement.

The Innovation Program allows funding for one year to begin, and an on-site team arrives at the end of the school year for an evaluation. The team must see proof that the program works. The test scores convinced them enough to fund Christmas for another year, this time increasing the amount to allow for another grade to take part.

When the current school year is completed, another on-site team from the Innovation Program Grants Center will visit the Woodbine School to determine whether the Read Aloud Club program has proper exportability. In other words, the team will decide if other schools throughout the state could be able to successfully implement Christmas' program.

Should the team decide to validate the Read Aloud Club statewide, each school will receive \$5,000 initial funding for books and initializing the program. Schools will then have to resort to other means of acquiring funds to run the program. Books may be purchased through a wholesaler; however, the weekly or monthly cost may still add up.

Christmas found inspiration from a memory of his aunt who read to him as a boy, and as a result, sparked his interest in reading and school. He hopes the Read Aloud Club will do the same for his enthusiastic students and keep them in school.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Camden County Tribune, Wednesday, October 14, 1992



PRINCIPAL JACK CHRISTMAS signs a book for student Latasha Randolph as part of the Read Aloud Club he initiated at Woodbine Elementary

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

THE SOUTHEAST GEORGIAN, Wednesday, February 19, 1992



WOODBINE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL media specialist JoAnn Calhoun poses with some of the students who read over 20,000 books in six months. Photo by Michelle Owens.

WES Wins School Bell Award

Woodbine Elementary School is the recipient of the 1991 School Bell Award given by the Georgia Association of Elementary Principals (GAESP) for innovative programs. WES is one of seven schools receiving the award; there are approximately 1,800 elementary schools in the state.

The award was presented at the GAESP fall conference in Gainesville, Ga. by Dr. Brooks Coleman, assistant superintendent of Gwinnet County Schools. JoAnn Calhoun, media specialist, and Jack Christmas, principal, received the award.

The award-winning program,

"Travel the World With Books", is a media-sponsored reading program designed to promote and encourage reading throughout the school. When the program began in September 1990, library book circulation skyrocketed. Approximately 450 students managed to check out an average of 500 books a week. The grand total of books read during the six-month period was 20,524.

The program also helped to promote an inter-disciplinary indepth study of selected foreign countries across all grade levels. Many activities focused on the historic customs and cultures of the peo-

ple. Children made native costumes, headdresses and jewelry. They prepared and ate food associated with the countries studied. Learning to speak numbers, words and phrases in a foreign language was a favorite activity of many students.

The study culminated in an international festival held at the end of the school year. Booths representing the twelve countries were set up on campus featuring students' art work, projects and samples of food. A program of songs, dances, games and activities were performed during the festival.

APPENDIX I

Woodbine Read Aloud Project

Site Visitation Team Report
for Year 1, 1991-1992

May, 1992

Woodbine Read Aloud Project

SUMMARY

The Woodbine Read Aloud Project was reviewed by the on-site visitation team on May 19-20, 1992. The team discussed the project progress with Mr. Jack Christmas, project director and principal of Woodbine Elementary School, and Ms. Jo Ann Calhoun, media specialist at Woodbine Elementary School. Dr. Mike McKenna presented the results of the first year's evaluation and along with Mr. Christmas, provided candid and clear answers to the questions posed by the visitation team members. In addition, visitation team members interviewed eight parents with children in the Read Aloud Club, visited four classrooms during teacher read aloud sessions, and interviewed three of the teachers participating in the project. Finally, visitation team members reviewed documentation materials provided by the project staff.

The visitation team finds the Woodbine Read Aloud Project to be in compliance with the general purpose and specific objectives developed in the funding proposal. The project staff and teachers are commended for what appears to be a high degree of success in the first year. While the evaluation data are not complete, it is apparent from visitation team interviews and review of project materials that the Woodbine Read Aloud Club has infused a great deal of pride in and excitement for reading among students, parents, teachers and staff. They are all commended for their support of the project.

The remainder of this report presents specific observations and recommendations of the visitation team in the areas of Project Information and Overview, Organization/Management, Effectiveness/Success, and Exportability.

1. Project Information and Overview

Acceptable

Comments:

The materials developed for the Woodbine Read Aloud Club are excellent. Teacher and student logs are simple, non-threatening vehicles for recording read aloud progress. (The issue of underreporting on logs should be considered.) It appears that parents and students have been well-informed of the program through teacher conferences and the monthly Club Newsletter. These materials and the teacher/staff contacts with parents provide both an excellent way to stay in touch with parents and a continuous public relations mechanism for the school.

Recommendations:

- 1) It is recommended that the project staff consider broader dissemination of the newsletter and project events. Such dissemination could be through the local newspaper, RESAs, and various business and military newsletters and meetings.

2. Organization/Management

Acceptable

Comments:

The project is well organized and soundly managed. It is obvious that children are reading and large numbers of books are being distributed to students.

There are several aspects of the project management that are particularly noteworthy. The project staff has established that no child will be denied the opportunity to participate in the program and "win a book." This is done through the volunteering of paraprofessionals and parents to read to those students whose parents choose not to participate in the program. (This appears to be only a small percentage of the students who are in this category.) The students are allowed to count their read aloud activities with these volunteers, thus providing them full membership in the club.

Another important aspect is the non-punitive nature of the club. Specifically, any log completed for the book awards is deemed appropriate so that problems with embarrassment or confrontation are eliminated. While the number of questionable logs is extremely low if not negligible, the principal meets with every student as logs are redeemed for prizes. During this informal interview, the principal reminds each student of the joy and importance of reading, as well as assures the student that the principal is interested in much more than discipline, buses, and toilets.

In addition to the all inclusive, non-punitive nature of this program, the project staff is commended for opening up the library to the parents and also making it a favorite place of many of the children. The reportedly high usage of the library by parents and students clearly indicates that the media center welcomes all readers. In addition, the efforts to include pre-school age children in the club are commended.

Recommendations:

- 1) Project staff should develop a means for more efficiently scoring the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. The principal spends an unnecessary amount of his personal time hand scoring these instruments. It is strongly recommended that the project evaluator contract with graduate students or clerical staff at the university to score the instrument. No project funds are to be used for this; Innovation Center support can be obtained without affecting the project.
- 2) It is recommended that the staff development plans be re-evaluated, particularly since these plans were not fully implemented. Consideration should be given to creating

opportunities for project staff and teachers to discuss how they are implementing the project and what specific curricular impacts the project might have (e.g., shift towards whole language, thematic units). Also, increased participation in professional conferences is encouraged.

- 3) It is recommended that the teachers participating in the project this year serve as staff development consultants for the third grade teachers entering the project in 1992-93.
- 4) Because a new grade level will be included next year, it is strongly recommended that the project materials budget be modified to reflect this change. It is recommended that because the materials budget for the 1991-92 year was approximately \$4000/grade level, the 1992-93 materials budget should be increased by \$4000 to approximately \$16,000 to allow for the inclusion of the third grade.
- 5) It is recommended that the project staff investigate using other social service agencies to assist in obtaining greater parental involvement from those parents who seldomly participate in school sponsored activities and programs designed to improve their child's learning.

3. Effectiveness/Success

Acceptable

Comments:

The project evaluation design supports the project objectives, and data collection and analysis are congruent with what was originally proposed. The project staff, teachers and evaluator are commended for their extensive efforts to collect a wide array of data to demonstrate the project's effectiveness. It is especially noteworthy that the project evaluator has been sensitive to the problems of data collection on reading programs and young children. He has selected instruments which appear to be well suited to the evaluation needs without becoming overly intrusive in the school lives of the students.

Recommendations:

- 1) In order to provide a form of triangulation for the data currently collected, it is recommended that the evaluator conduct parent and student individual interviews. These interviews would allow for in depth questioning into the project through the eyes of students and parents. These interviews should involve approximately 10-15 students and 10-15 parents representing the various levels of participation in the project. (These interviews would support objectives 1 & 2.)
- 2) It is recommended that, if appropriate, data collection techniques used with the K-2 participants also be used with the third grade participants.
- 3) It is recommended that the word "ability" in objectives 3 & 4 be changed to "achievement."
- 4) It is recommended that the evaluation budget be increased to reflect the additional evaluation data collection and analysis requirements. This budget modification should not be made at the expense of other components of the project.
- 5) It is recommended that the library check out system should include check out data from at least three years prior to project implementation. These data plus project year data can be most readily obtained through automation of the library check out system. It is recommended that the 1992-93 project budget include an additional \$1500 in the equipment budget to address this automation need.

4. Exportability

Acceptable

Comments:

There are not enough superlatives to describe the work of the principal, the media center director and the teachers in making the Woodbine Read Aloud Club such an exciting and apparently successful program. The principal is especially commended for his unwavering commitment to the read aloud concept. While it is clear that the project components are exportable, they will not become successful without strong leadership within the school. Mr. Christmas serves as a working definition of the principal as instructional leader, and he is to be commended for his work.

Recommendations:

- 1) Implementation and staff development plans should be developed by the end of the next project year when the project will be reviewed for validation.
- 2) Because of the difficulty of obtaining clear cut "hard" evidence of effectiveness of read aloud programs, it is recommended that validation material not only emphasize the observed successes of the program, but also highlight the program simplicity for adoption and its unique characteristic of combining many of the components of successful read aloud programs in one easily managed program.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF ON-SITE REVIEW TEAM

A. Continuation of funding for one year.

Continuation of funding for the second year is recommended.

B. Modifications necessary for state validation.

No modifications in the project are necessary for validation.

C. Improvements to project effort.

Recommendations previously listed suggest, among other items, new avenues for obtaining a greater amount of parental involvement, and revision of staff development plans. These are not major concerns of the site visitation team, but should be addressed to enhance project results.

Certification by On-site Review Team

The members of the on-site review team hereby certify that the team visited

Woodbine Read Aloud Project

on May 19 - 20, 1992

(Name of Project)

(Dates)

conducted an extensive review of all project activities and have made specific recommendations to the project staff.

Robert O. Mitchell

(Chairperson)

Jan Layson

(Name)

Barbara Rose

(Name)

Judith Morris

(Name)